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GREATER ROCHESTER AFTER-SCHOOL ALLIANCE (GRASA) AFTER-SCHOOL ASSESSMENT 2009-10 FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT

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SEPTEMBER 2010

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	1
Introduction	2
Description of the GRASA After-School Assessment	3
Program Observations	3
Program Observation Process	3
Collaborative Review Process	3
Partner Development	5
Quality of After-School Programs	6
Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA)	6
Overall Quality of GRASA Program Offerings Year Five	7
Scores by Subscale	8
Scores by Agency	11
Reliability of the Youth PQA Form A	17
Inter-Rater Reliability of the Youth PQA Form A	18
Summary of Findings and Recommendations	19
Program Youth PQA Observations	19
Limitations	19

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This report would not be possible without the contributions of many partners, including after-school programs, foundations and other organizations – each consisting of individuals who gave their time, ideas, hard work, energy, resources, and support to the GRASA After-School Assessment.

Financial support was provided by Rochester Area Community Foundation. Other contributing partners include ArtPeace, Inc.; Boys and Girls Club of Greater Rochester, Inc.; Cameron Community Ministries; Charles Settlement House; Children's Institute, Inc.; City of Rochester Bureau of Parks, Recreation and Human Services; The Community Place of Greater Rochester, Inc.; Generations Child and Elder Care; Greater Rochester After-School Alliance (GRASA); Ibero-American Action League, Inc. School-Age Program; Quad A for Kids; Railroad Junction School-Age Program and Summer Day Camp; Rochester Childfirst Network (RCN); Rush-Henrietta School District's School-Age Child Care Programs; Society for the Protection and Care of Children (SPCC); Wilson Commencement Park Early Learning Center; and YMCA of Greater Rochester.

We thank the after-school program staff and administrators in Monroe County who work closely, on a daily basis, with thousands of children when they are not in school. Their personal attention to the children's health, safety, development, and enjoyment is a major contribution to the overall well-being of our community. We appreciate GRASA members who provided feedback and helpful insights to inform our processes and overall support of our work in the youth program community.

This project could not be a success without the skillful Master Observers who, over five years, achieved a highly respectable level of inter-rater reliability.

We are excited about the GRASA Assessment and its impact on youth through improving the quality of after-school programs. With a shared vision, we will continue to work towards a unified standard of quality for after-school programs that will enrich the experiences of youth, parents, and staff.

Introduction

The GRASA Assessment began in Rochester, New York in 2005 as part of a community-wide initiative to learn about the quality of after-school programs in Monroe County. This partnership is supported by the Greater Rochester After-School Alliance (GRASA), including program staff members, administrators, parents, policymakers, and funders. The three-fold mission of GRASA is to improve the quality of after-school programming, to increase children's access to quality programs, and to understand the funding streams that are available to improve quality and access.

The GRASA Assessment provides an integrated process for ensuring that after-school programs have the information they need for making informed decisions to improve practice and outcomes. It provides useful data analysis on the status of after-school program quality. Confidentiality of all participants is maintained in all areas and is of the utmost importance to our partnership.

Program Observations

Thirty-five (35) after-school program observations took place at eighteen (18) sites this year. Observations took place in programs serving youth in two age groups: grades four through six and grades seven through nine. The content of programs observed ranged from sports programs to tutoring, leadership development to theater, representing the broad spectrum of positive youth development opportunities in Monroe County. The participating programs include:

- ❖ Cameron Community Ministries
- ❖ Charles Settlement House
- ❖ City of Rochester Department of Recreation and Youth Services
- ❖ The Community Place of Greater Rochester, Inc.
- ❖ Generations Child and Elder Care
- ❖ Quad A for Kids
- ❖ Railroad Junction School-Age Program and Summer Day Camp
- ❖ Rush-Henrietta School District's School-Age Child Care Program
- ❖ Society for the Protection and Care of Children (SPCC)
- ❖ Wilson Commencement Park Early Learning Center

Description of the GRASA After-School Assessment

Program Observations

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

Program Observation Process

- Master Observer contacts the program staff member to schedule the observation date
- Program observation occurs (2 hours)
- Two observers may be present to measure inter-rater reliability
- Observer(s) may need to conduct an interview (10-15 minutes) with program staff member(s) immediately after the observation to obtain information not evident during observation
- Observer(s) completes the score sheet and submits it to Children's Institute for processing
- Project coordinator reviews the score sheet for accuracy, follows up with observer if necessary
- Score sheet is checked again for accuracy by a data clerk, the information is entered into the database; a summary report is produced
- Photocopy of original score sheet and summary report are mailed directly to program staff member(s)
- Program staff member reviews information and shares with supervisor (optional)
- If 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 process so that if any program staff member believes that the report does not accurately represent the program, there is a formal mechanism to address this. In the collaborative review, program staff members are welcome and encouraged to raise questions they have about the score of any of the quality indicators.

This year we received one formal collaborative review request.

1. 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. In this form, the staff member outlines the details of the item(s) in question with additional supporting information. This must be submitted within 15 days of receipt of the original score sheet.
2. 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 whether any items may be scored differently.
3. 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. If the scores are revised, they are entered into the database.
4. 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.

Partner Development

Introductory Youth PQA Training

All program and administrative staff members are invited to attend an Introductory Training session in which they are introduced to the Youth PQA. This session provides history and background of GRASA, the GRASA Assessment project and an in-depth overview of the scale. Participants learn observation and scoring techniques, discuss the benefits of using the scale in program assessment and quality improvement processes, and review the observation process/logistics overall. Program providers are encouraged to complete a self-assessment on their program as part of their familiarization with the scale.

Master Observer Training

Master observers are selected based on their experience in youth programming, program observation, and interest in participating. The training includes a fifteen-hour program in the first year of participation. Knowledge of the measure, refinement of observation skills, inter-rater reliability standards, logistics of the observation process, observation guidelines, and protocol are studied in depth. This year, interview questions were developed and provided to master observers to help them acquire information and score indicators not evident during the program observation. Observers were briefed on the appropriate use of these questions, along with pre-existing questions provided in the Youth PQA manual.

Master observers are trained to attain and maintain a high level of inter-rater reliability ($a/a+d > .85$). They do not conduct independent observations without achieving 85%. For observers beginning a second year of training and in each subsequent year, an additional training of four to five hours is required.

Nine master observers returned from year four for debriefing and retraining.

Quality of 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 both 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 GRASA programs measuring four subscales, with 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

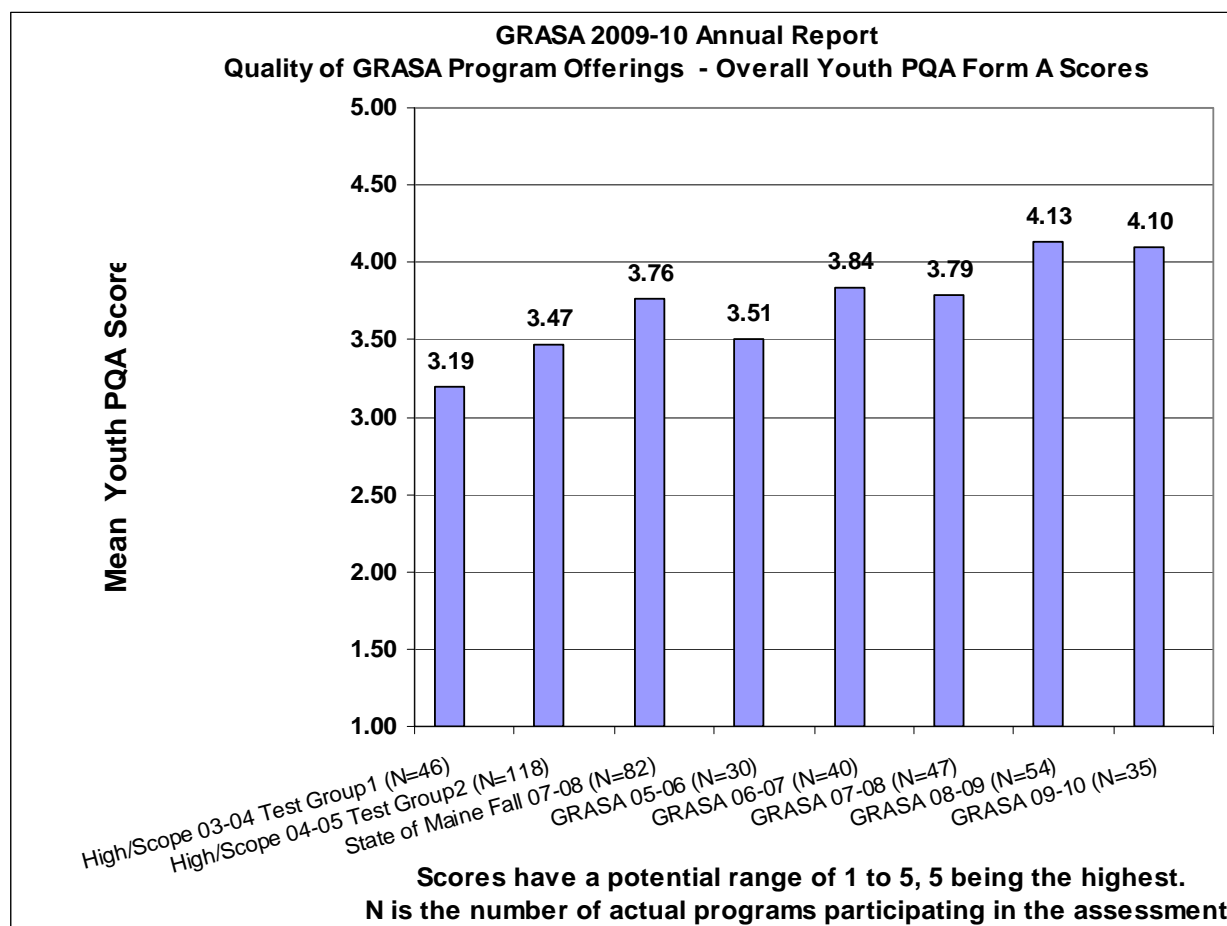
- P. Youth have opportunities to set goals and make plans.
- Q. Youth have opportunities to make choices based on their interests.
- R. Youth have opportunities to reflect.

Overall Quality of GRASA Program Offerings Year Five

The overall quality of 35 GRASA program offerings in grades four through nine was 4.10 in 2009-10. The overall quality of 21 GRASA programs grades four to six was 4.07 and the overall quality of 14 programs for grades seven to nine was 4.14. For 2008-09, the mean score for 54 programs in grades four to nine was 4.13. Programs for grades seven to nine were evaluated starting in 2008-09. HighScope Educational Research Foundation (the authors of Youth PQA) performed a Youth PQA validation study during 2003-05. They reported results on two waves of data from two years. For comparison purposes, the resulting mean scores using the Youth PQA Form A are shown for both GRASA and HighScope's findings in Figure 1 below. Also included in Figure 1 are recently reported Youth PQA results in the state of Maine.

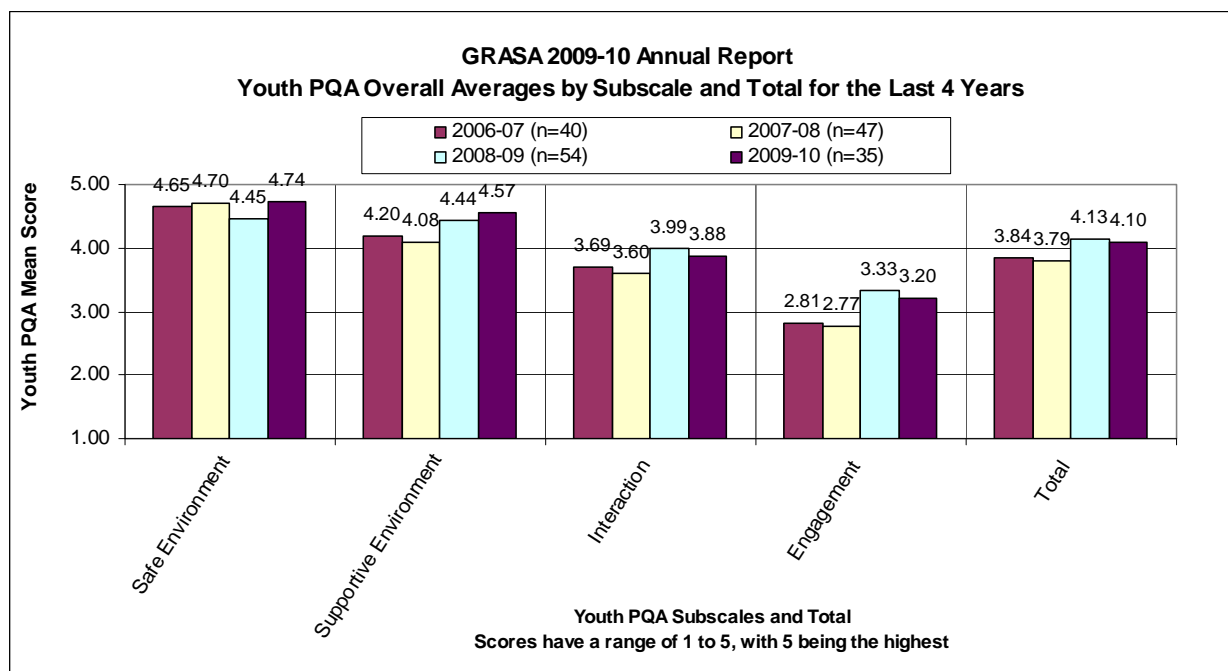
When comparing the GRASA programs to the HighScope programs, the difference in scores for Year One are not statistically significant. However, there is statistical significance (at or equal to .05) in the scores from GRASA years two, three, four and five, which are higher than either HighScope years (significant at $\leq .05$ in t-Tests).

Figure 1. Overall Quality of GRASA Program Offerings



Scores by Subscale – Grades 4-6 and 7-9

Figure 2. GRASA Overall Mean Scores by Subscale

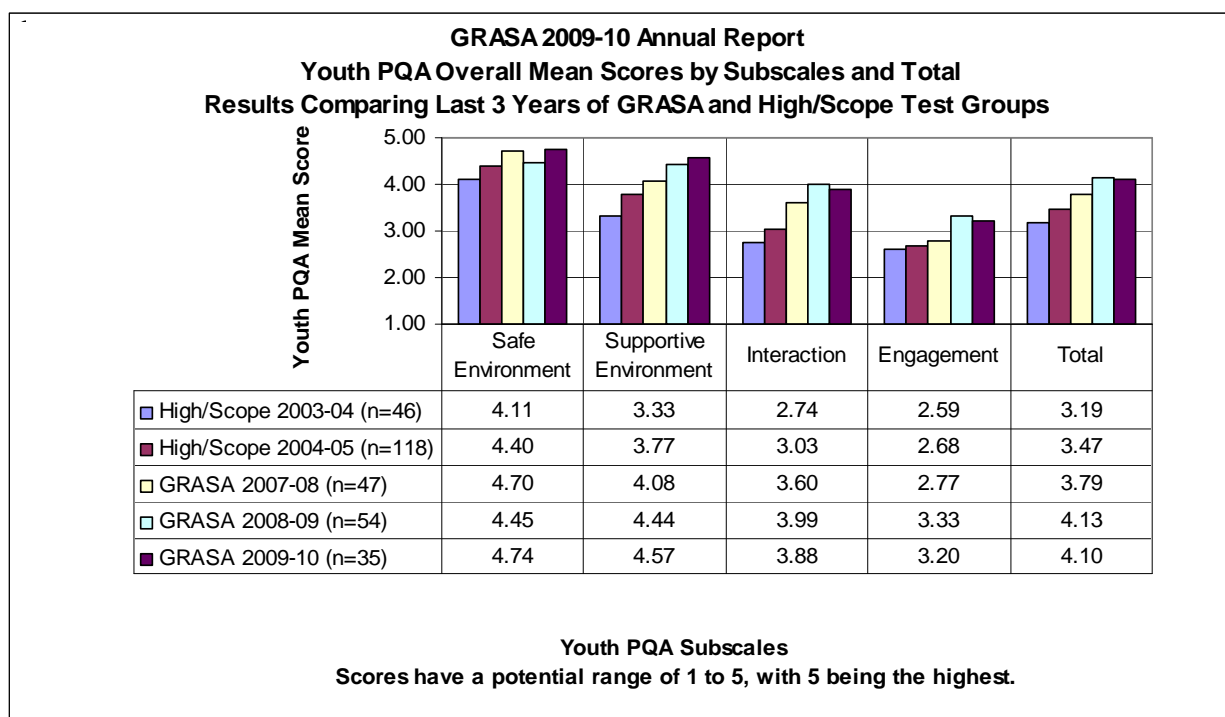


GRASA 2009-10 Annual Report					
Youth PQA Overall Averages by Subscale for the Last 4 Years					
	Subscale				
School Year	Safe Environment	Supportive Environment	Interaction	Engagement	Total
2006-07 (n=40)	4.65	4.20	3.69	2.81	3.84
2007-08 (n=47)	4.70	4.08	3.60	2.77	3.79
2008-09 (n=54)	4.45	4.44	3.99	3.33	4.13
2009-10 (n=35)	4.74	4.57	3.88	3.20	4.10

Note: 7th to 9th grade programs started to be evaluated in 2008-09; previous years only included 4th to 6th grade programs.

In general, first year scores were lower than subsequent years on each subscale and total. There were improvements in all subscales from Year One to Year Two. The only significant improvement from Year Two to Year Three is found in the Safe Environment subscale, but all Year Three scores were higher than Year One. The decrease in scores between Year Two and Year Three may be explained by an influx of programs new to the assessment process and Youth PQA. Year Four was higher than previous years in total scores and all subscales except Safe Environment. Year Five continues to show improvement, especially in areas of Safe Environment and Supportive Environment. There is evidence of a trend toward a program quality improvement process emerging in programs participating for multiples year of this partnership.

Figure 3. Comparing GRASA and HighScope Scores by Subscale – Grades 4-6 and 7-9



Significance of Differences in Figure 3 above:

2006-07 Results

Comparing the 2006-07 GRASA scores to the two HighScope studies scores in Figure 3 above, all of the 2006-07 GRASA scores except for Engagement were significantly above both the HighScope 2003-04 and the HighScope 2004-05 study scores (based upon *t*-tests, significance at $p < .05$).

2007-08 Results

Comparing the 2007-08 GRASA scores to the two HighScope studies scores in Figure 3 above, all of the 2007-08 GRASA scores except for Engagement were significantly above both the HighScope 2003-04 and the HighScope 2004-05 study scores (based upon one-sample *t*-tests, significance at $p < .05$).

Comparing the 2007-08 GRASA scores to the 2006-07 GRASA scores in Figure 3 above, none of the 2007-08 scores were significantly different than the 2006-07 scores (based upon *t*-tests, significance at $p < .05$).

2008-09 Results

Comparing the 2008-09 GRASA scores to the two HighScope studies scores in Figure 3 above, all of the 2008-09 GRASA were significantly greater than both the HighScope 2003-04 and the HighScope 2004-05 study scores (based upon one-sample *t*-tests, significance at $p < .05$).

Comparing the 2008-09 GRASA scores to the 2007-08 GRASA scores in Figure 3 above, none of the 2008-09 scores were significantly different than the 2007-08 scores (based upon *t*-tests, significance at $p < .05$).

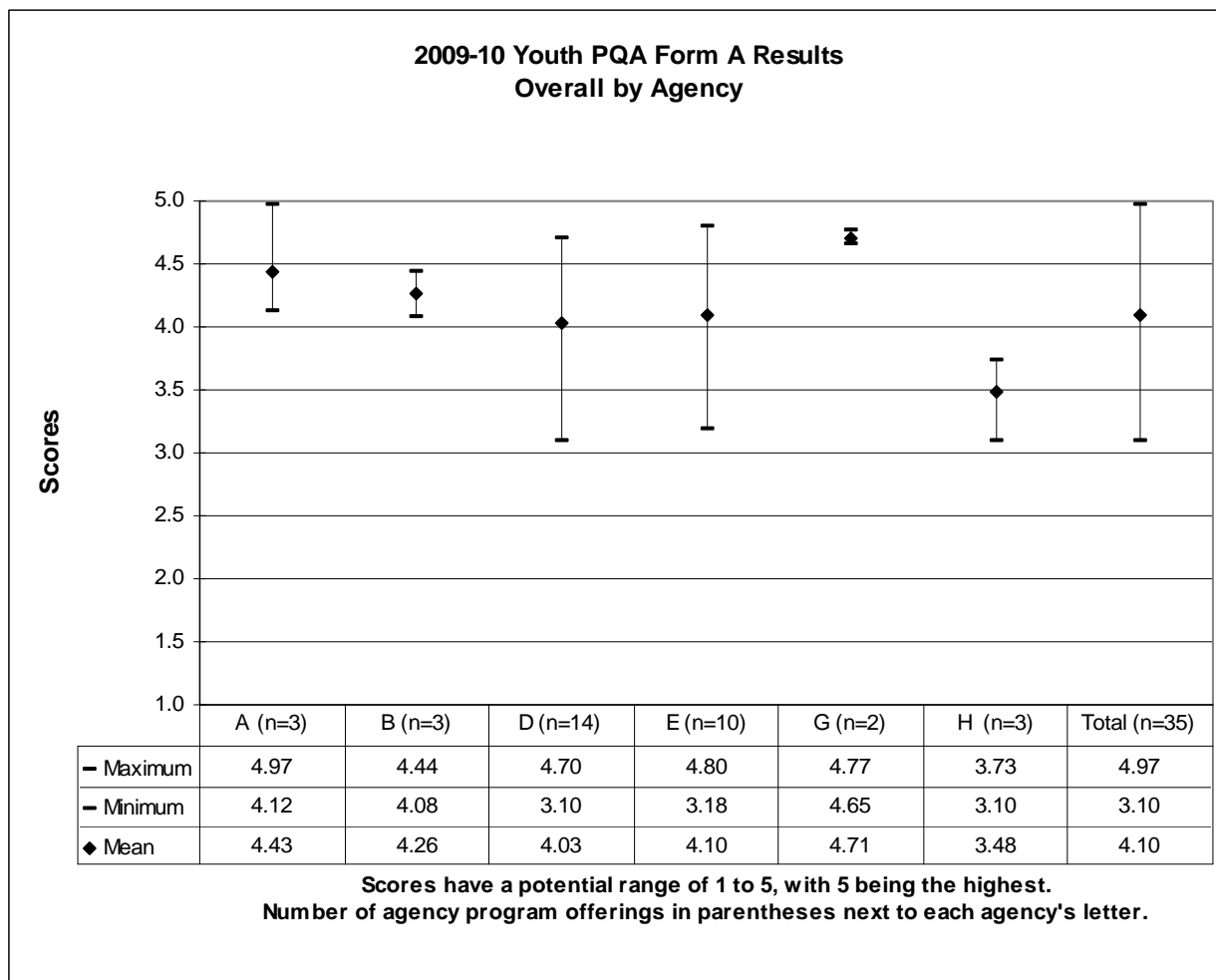
2009-10 Results

Comparing the 2009-10 GRASA scores to the two HighScope studies scores in Figure 3 above, all of the 2009-10 GRASA scores were significantly greater than both the HighScope 2003-04 and the HighScope 2004-05 study scores (based upon one-sample *t*-tests, significance at $p < .05$).

Comparing the 2009-10 GRASA scores to the 2008-09 GRASA scores in Figure 3 above, none of the 2009-10 scores were significantly different than the 2008-09 scores (based upon *t*-tests, significance at $p < .05$).

Scores by Agency

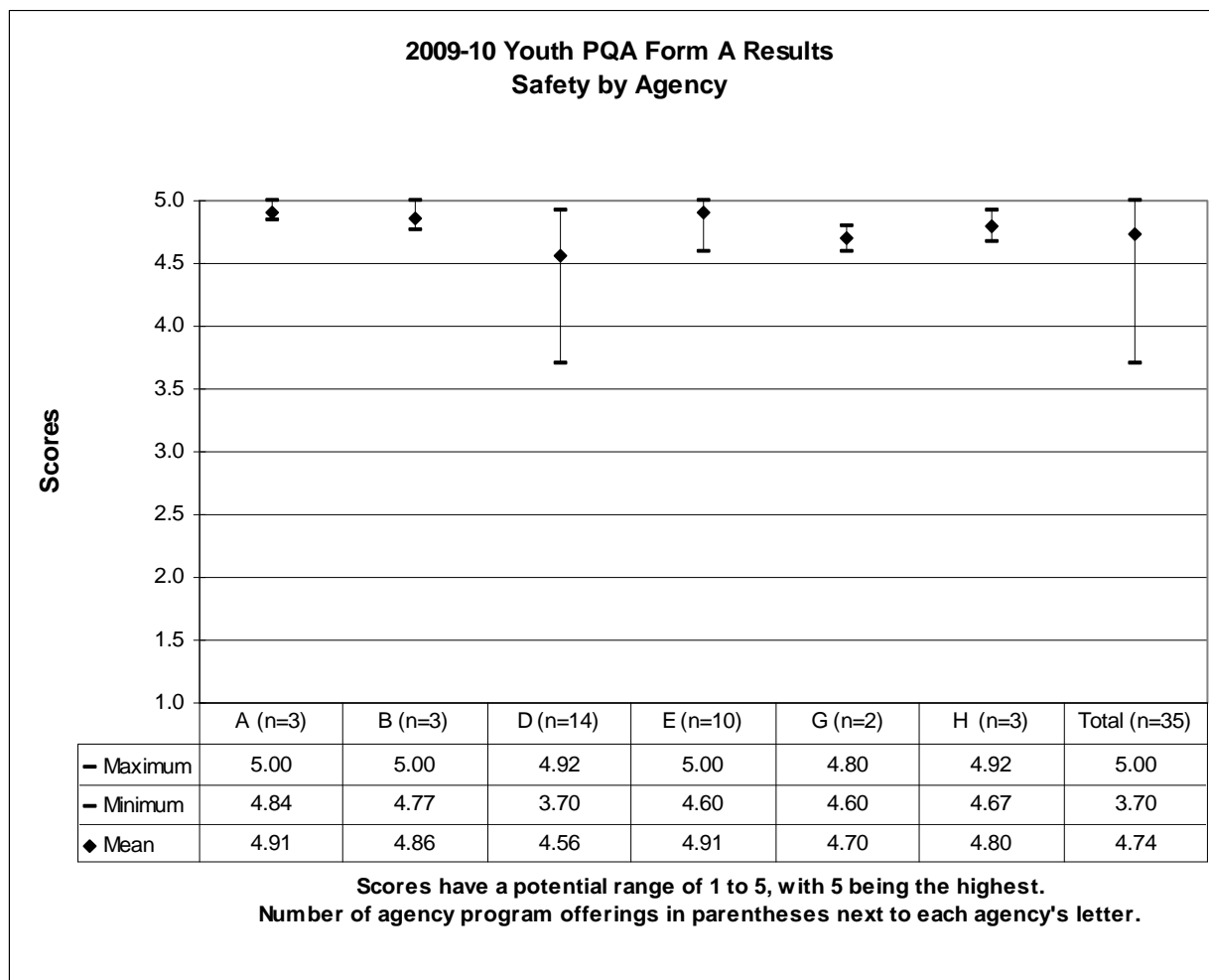
Figure 4. Overall Score for all Four Subscales Combined



Number of Program Offerings Within Score Range by Agency								
Score Range	A	B	D	E	G	H	Total	Percent
1-1.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
2-2.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
3-3.9	0	0	6	5	0	3	14	40.0%
4-4.9	3	3	8	5	2	0	21	60.0%
5.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	3	3	14	10	2	3	35	100.0%

All programs in all agencies scored above the 3.0 average. This is an indicator of program quality.

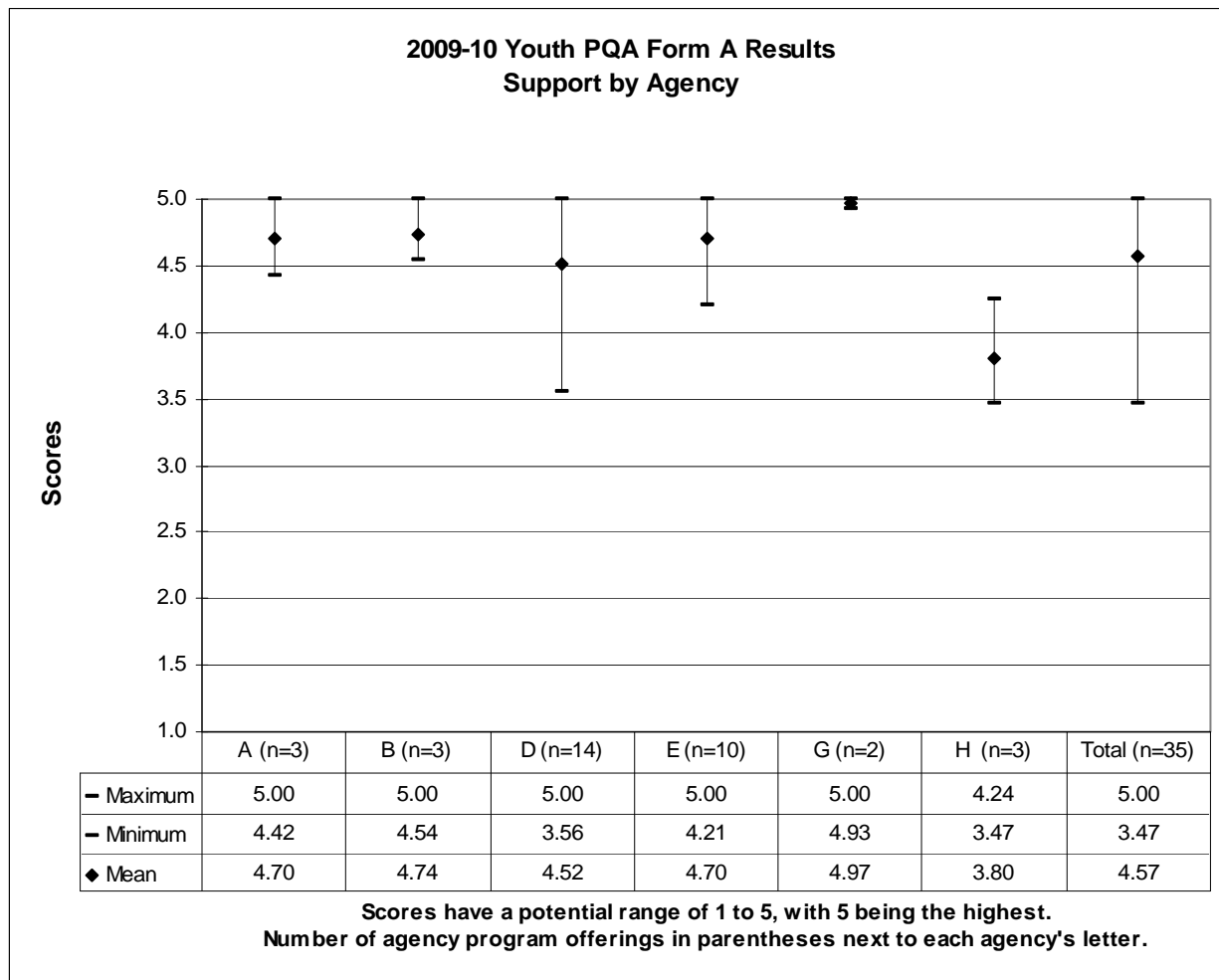
Figure 5. Safe Environment Subscale



Number of Program Offerings Within Score Range by Agency								
Score Range	A	B	D	E	G	H	Total	Percent
1-1.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
2-2.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
3-3.9	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2.9%
4-4.9	2	2	13	5	2	3	27	77.1%
5.0	1	1	0	5	0	0	7	20.0%
Total	3	3	14	10	2	3	35	100.0%

Agencies scored fairly well in the Safety subscale with little variability in scores for most. The minimum item score of 3.70 is above the 3.0 average and the overall mean of 4.74 indicates that agencies are providing safe after-school options for youth.

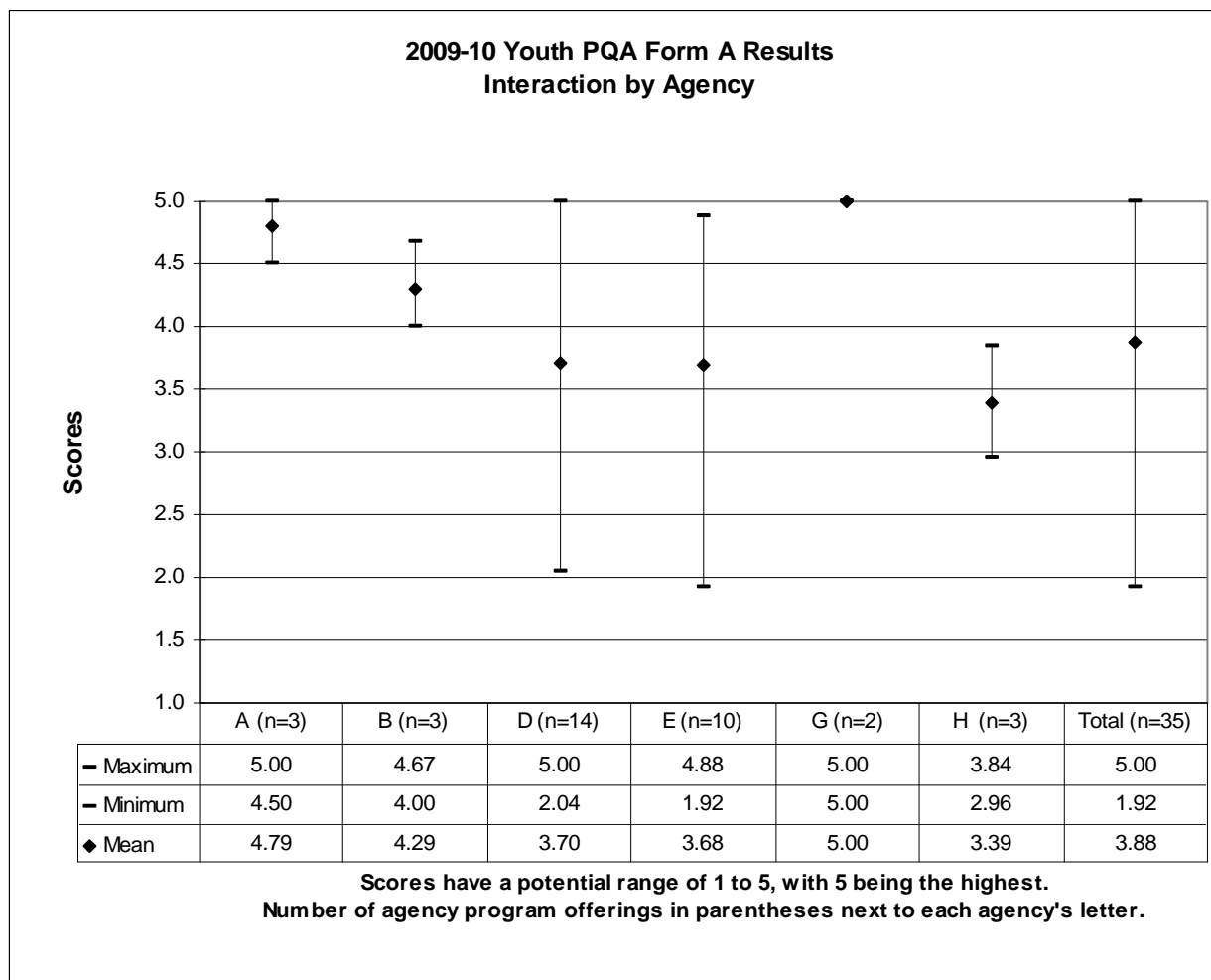
Figure 6. Supportive Environment Subscale



Number of Program Offerings Within Score Range by Agency								
Score Range	A	B	D	E	G	H	Total	Percent
1-1.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
2-2.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
3-3.9	0	0	1	0	0	2	3	8.6%
4-4.9	2	2	12	9	1	1	27	77.1%
5.0	1	1	1	1	1	0	5	14.3%
Total	3	3	14	10	2	3	35	100.0%

In general, agencies scored fairly well in the Support subscale. The minimum item score of 3.47 is above the 3.0 average and the overall mean of 4.57 shows that programs are supporting the development of the young people in their programs.

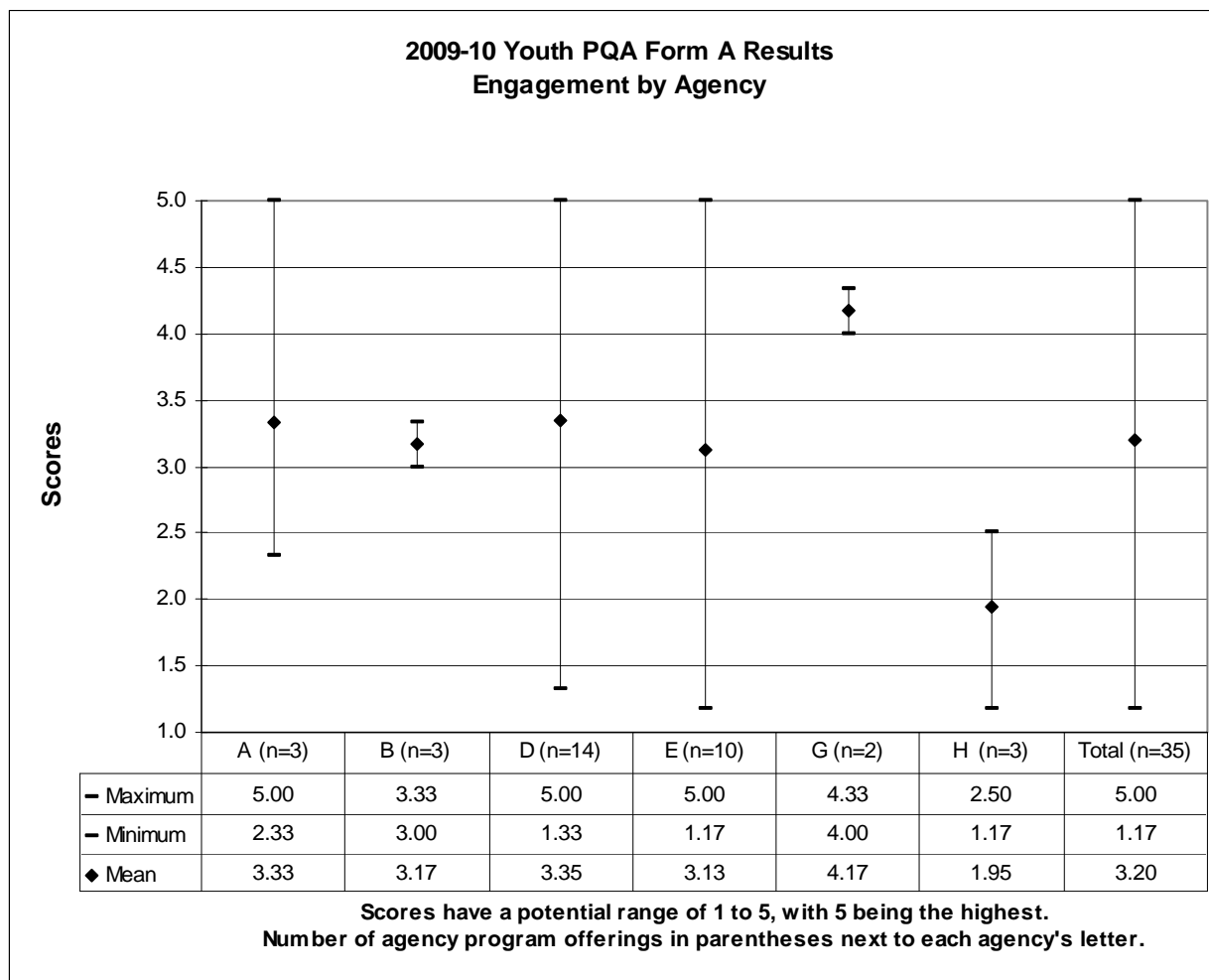
Figure 7. Interaction Subscale



Number of Program Offerings Within Score Range by Agency								
Score Range	A	B	D	E	G	H	Total	Percent
1-1.9	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2.9%
2-2.9	0	0	4	0	0	1	5	14.3%
3-3.9	0	0	3	4	0	2	9	25.7%
4-4.9	2	3	5	5	0	0	15	42.9%
5.0	1	0	2	0	2	0	5	14.3%
Total	3	3	14	10	2	3	35	100.0%

Some programs are struggling with the items in this subscale, however, all agencies have a mean above 3.0/average. Note that some of the items on this subscale deal with small groups and those items do not fit well with child care center-based programs, as they do not use exclusively small groups in their programming structure.

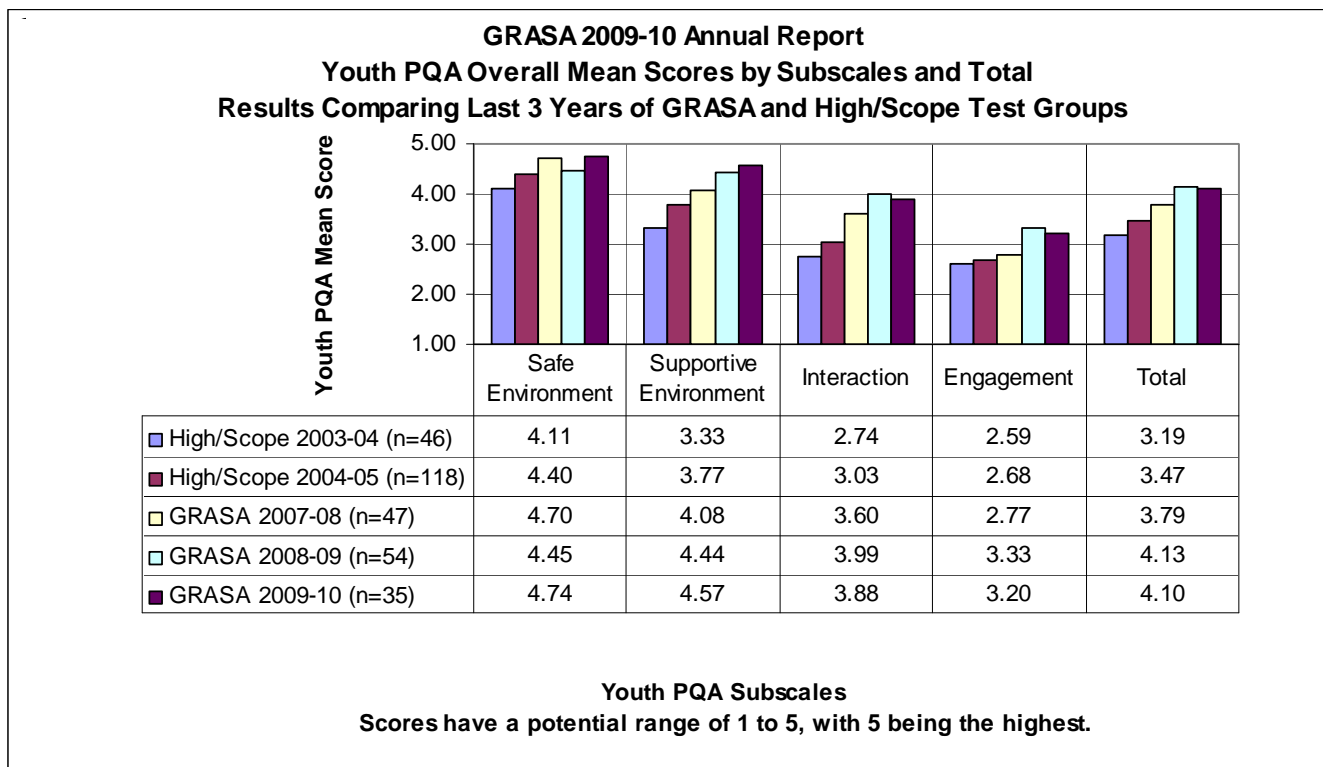
Figure 8. Engagement Subscale



Number of Program Offerings Within Score Range by Agency								
Score Range	A	B	D	E	G	H	Total	Percent
1-1.9	0	0	2	2	0	1	5	14.3%
2-2.9	2	0	3	3	0	2	10	28.6%
3-3.9	0	3	3	3	0	0	9	25.7%
4-4.9	0	0	5	1	2	0	8	22.9%
5.0	1	0	1	1	0	0	3	8.6%
Total	3	3	14	10	2	3	35	100.0%

Engagement is still the lowest scoring of the four subscales and an area to focus on for future quality improvement efforts. This could take place in many ways, e.g., youth could participate in planning projects and activities, youth might decide how activities take place, youth could reflect on activities, youth might publicly present their work and/or accomplishments, or youth could have structured opportunities to share feedback on activities.

Figure 9. GRASA Subscale Mean by Grade Level



Compared to overall scores from 2008-09, improvement can be seen in areas of Safe Environment and Supportive Environment for 2009-10. Interaction and Engagement showed a slight decrease, but the total score varied only by 0.03 points.

Fourth to sixth grade classrooms improved their total score from 2008-09 in addition to scores in Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, and Interaction. Engagement is the only subscale to have a lower score than last year at this grade level in 2009-10.

While 2008-09 was the first year that seventh to ninth grade classrooms were evaluated, progress is noted for the Supportive Environment subscale this year. Suggested areas for improvement next year, based on the 2009-10 scores, include Safe Environment, Interaction, and Engagement, which would also bring up the total score for this grade level.

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 – do the items in the subscale fit well together? Are they referring to the same thing or are they unrelated? Are the items, when grouped together, measuring what they are designed to measure?

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's alpha values, we have what is considered a numerical coefficient of reliability. Table 1 below displays the Cronbach's alpha values for the last four years of the GRASA Youth PQA measure results. For comparison purposes, the HighScope reported results from their testing are also included in Table 1.

Table 1												
2009-10 GRASA Annual Report												
Internal Reliability of the Youth PQA Form A Measure												
Sample Size and Cronbach Alpha Values												
	GRASA								HighScope			
	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		Test Group 1 2003-04		Test Group 2 2004-05	
Youth PQA Form A	N	Alpha	N	Alpha	N	Alpha	N	Alpha	N	Alpha	N	Alpha
Total for 4 all Subscales	40	0.91	47	0.88	53	0.76	35	0.81	22	0.84	118	0.74
Safe Environment (5 Items)	40	0.66	47	0.45	53	-0.03	35	0.36	22	0.38	118	0.43
Supportive Environment (6 Items)	40	0.79	47	0.69	53	0.62	35	0.55	22	0.85	118	0.84
Interaction (4 items)	40	0.85	47	0.79	53	0.49	35	0.64	22	0.72	118	0.64
Engagement (3 items)	40	0.84	47	0.84	53	0.79	35	0.75	22	0.71	118	0.70

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.

The Youth PQA has consistent internal reliability with the exception of the Safety subscale. The reason for this involves the content of the five items: 1) psychological and emotional safety promoted, 2) environment free of health hazards, 3) emergency supplies and procedures present,

4) space and furniture accommodates activities, and 5) healthy food and drinks provided. The items are not closely correlated, thus the subscale is not as reliable as it could be if the items were closer in content.

Inter-Rater Reliability of the 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 so that we can calculate the level of agreement or inter-rater reliability between different observers.

Table 2 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=agreement and d=disagreement. The GRASA inter-rater reliability for exact matches was found to be 0.93 for four observations this year. For comparison, the developers of the Youth PQA reported an inter-rater reliability 0.65 (N=48). The inter-rater reliability findings for each subscale and total in Table 2 show that the administration of the Youth PQA by GRASA conforms to high standards and is of high quality. HighScope's test findings are also included in Table 2 for comparison.

Table 2					
2009-10 GRASA Annual Report					
Inter-Rater Reliability of the Youth PQA Form A Measure					
	GRASA				HighScope
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	Test Group 1 2003-04
Sample size N	8	8	7	4	48
Median Inter-rater Reliability for Exact Matches ¹	0.79	0.85	0.86	0.93	0.65
Safe Environment (r)	0.53*	0.98	0.74	0.49	0.48
Supportive Environment (r)	0.90	0.95	0.80	0.91	0.69
Interaction (r)	0.80	0.93	0.95	0.94	0.83
Engagement (r)	0.63*	0.94	0.98	0.87	0.72
Total Youth PQA Form A (r)	0.89	0.96	0.98	0.90	0.66
Notes: ¹ Inter-rater reliability for exact matches is equal to a/a+d, where a=agreement and d=disagreement. * Signifies that all GRASA inter-rater reliability values are significant at p<.05 except those designated. (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

Program Youth PQA Observations

- This is the second year the after-school assessment included programs serving youth in grades seven through nine. Results indicate quality programming in place.
- A consistent strength in program quality continues to be within the Safety and Supportive Environment subscales. However, there is a need for focus upon improvement within the Engagement subscale as this is the subscale with the greatest variability of quality including scores within the low range.
- The Youth PQA and program observation process continues to be reported by participating agencies as a valuable component of their program improvement processes.

Recommendations

The domains assessed by the Youth PQA are hierarchical in nature, so the areas of Safety and Support are viewed as being predecessors to the areas of Interaction and, finally, Engagement. We continue to recommend that program directors determine which Youth PQA stage to address first with their programs, and not attempt to impact all areas at once. Given the sequential aspect of the domains, trying to increase Engagement (for example) before adequate levels of Safety, Support, and Interaction are in place, would be difficult to achieve. However, we do recommend that program directors begin work with their staff to develop specific strategies to address engagement issues, and formulate an implementation plan and timeline that aligns with and supports current progress in other areas. Such a step would also facilitate proper assessment of required resources in light of broader program goals, and help ensure that current gains across the subscales will be maintained.

Limitations

This evaluation has a number of limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results presented in this report.

The program observations, using the Youth PQA instrument, were conducted by highly trained independent observers using a valid and reliable instrument. However, each program offering was observed only one time. While provision was made for challenges to the accuracy of the Youth PQA scores by program staff and administration, it is possible that any single assessment might not be representative of a particular program offering. We note, however, that we received only one review request for Youth PQA assessments in 2009-10 for the observations considered in this report. Due to unavoidable logistical constraints among observers and at some program sites, there were a limited number of co-observations completed to measure inter-rater reliability. However, for the co-observations conducted, the inter-rater reliability among the observers was excellent.