

TORONTO SCHOOL-AGE QUALITY STANDARDS INVENTORY

Developed by the City of Toronto's
Children's Services Division
in support of Toronto's
after-school
programs

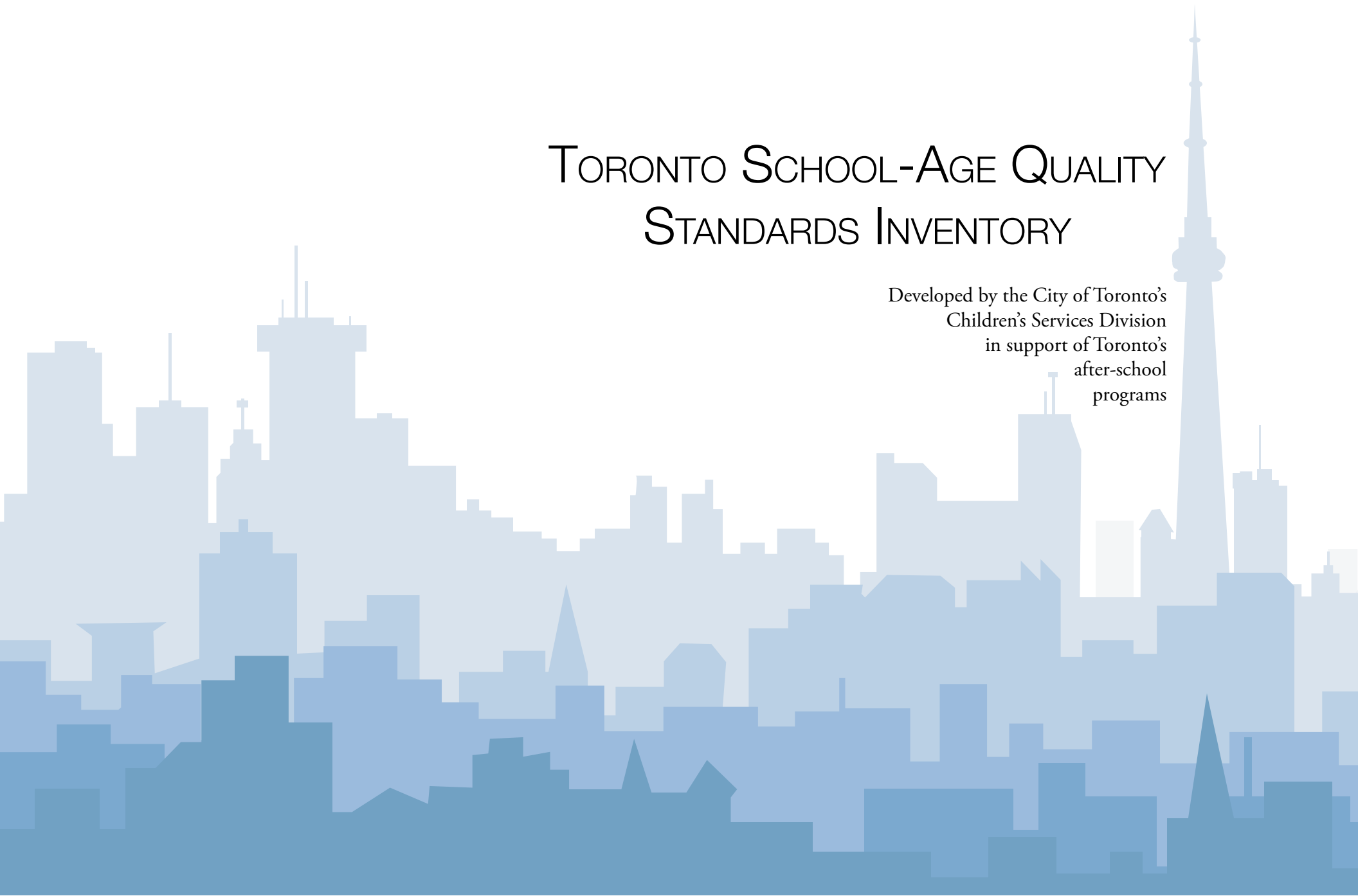


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Toronto's School-Age Quality Standards Inventory

The School-Age Quality Standards Inventory is an evidence-based and expert-revieweded resource. Items in this inventory were drawn from a range of research evidence generated regionally, nationally, and internationally. The Inventory items were reviewed and approved by various experts on after-school programming in Toronto balancing research and practice.

The Inventory is organized into 10 categories reflecting Toronto's 10 after-school program quality standards. Each category contains several items indicative of high quality in after-school programs. These are the characteristics that are present in high quality programs.

The 10 Quality Standards are:

- Sound Leadership & Staffing Practices
- Quality Interactions & Relationships
- Provides a Positive Atmosphere
- Safe & Healthy
- Fosters Well-Being & Healthy Self-Beliefs
- Quality Programming
- Intentional Pedagogical Approaches
- Culturally Responsive & Inclusive
- Integrated Community Partnerships
- Evaluates Effectiveness

This inventory is meant to be a self-evaluation resource that informs a program's goals for continuous improvement. It is a resource to support capacity building by empowering and supporting after-school program professionals. This inventory is not meant to be used as a high-stakes accountability assessment.

Why use the resource?

This Inventory is designed to help support programs' quality improvement efforts by providing specific look-fors indicative of high quality after-school programming. Specifically, the Inventory enables programs to:

- ✓ Support general program quality;
- ✓ Identify areas of strength and need;
- ✓ Develop action plans;
- ✓ Track ongoing progress;
- ✓ Reflect on improvements made

The purpose of this inventory is to support action planning and ongoing self-evaluation, with the overarching aim of supporting broad improvement of quality in programs both generally and in specific areas of after-school programming.

Who fills it out and When?

Program leaders/managers complete the Inventory and can involve colleagues and other stakeholders if they so choose. The School-Age Quality Standards Inventory is meant to be a living document that stimulates dialogue and serves as the foundation of a program's action plan. We recommend completing it at least annually, and revisiting action plans continuously. Some leaders may benefit from completing the document more frequently (e.g., every 3, 6, or 9 months).

Getting Started:

- Read each item and mark the "Yes" box (i.e., table cell) if your program is "fully demonstrating" the practice described;
- If not "fully demonstrating" that practice, proceed to determine the next actionable step to advance your program towards "full demonstration";
- Next, provide an estimated date by when you can realistically accomplish that next action in the box on the right of the table.

Some items may not be feasible due to your program's current structure. In such a case write "n/a" in the "yes" box. Only select this option if the practice is truly not feasible given the structure of your program.

Next Steps

Review the actions you've identified in specific categories and consider them in terms of how they relate to the 10 quality standards in general. Identify your top-priority actions as the initial ones to implement in supporting your program's broader action planning.

To support programs' implementation of the Inventory and 10 Quality Standards, an accompanying Support Guide has also been developed. This Support Guide provides programs with strategies proven effective in implementing the Inventory. Together, the Inventory and Support Guide provide Toronto's after-school programs with practical, evidence-based resources to support the delivery of high quality programs for all children in after-school programs.

LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING PRACTICES

This category includes items related to setting program goals, assembling a staffing complement, retaining staff, and building a professional learning framework.

LEADERSHIP & STAFFING

QUALITY STANDARD		Yes	NEXT ACTION	DATE BY
1 PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS				
Our program...				
1.1	Has a program statement for our school-age out-of-school-time program			
1.2	Has a set of program goals with defined indicators of what each goal's success looks like			
1.3	Staff are able to articulate the program statement and goals			
1.4	Has a sound financial plan to support sustainability			
1.5	Leadership actively pursues resources to enhance the program (e.g., partnerships, sponsorships, donations)			
1.6	Leadership monitors community demographics to inform outreach strategies			
1.7	Leadership monitors current requirements regarding school-age out-of-school-time programs			
1.8	Actively involves children and staff in program design			

LEADERSHIP & STAFFING

QUALITY STANDARD		Yes	NEXT ACTION	DATE BY
1.9	Has an electronic media policy (e.g., cell phone and electronics use, image capture)			
1.10	Maintains a positive, supportive and respectful work environment			
2 STAFFING COMPLEMENT				
Our program...				
2.1	Recruits skilled and (at least one) qualified staff who are well-suited to particular roles			
2.2	Prioritizes hiring of caring and committed staff			
2.3	Staff reflect the diversity of the communities served (i.e., in terms of gender, identity, race, culture, sexual orientation, language, and ability)			
2.4	Maintains a low child-to-staff ratio			
2.5	Requires staff certification and training in First Aid and CPR			
2.6	Requires police reference checks (i.e., vulnerable sector screenings) for staff and volunteers			
3 STAFF RETENTION				
Our program...				
3.1	Provides adequate compensation to staff commensurate with the sector's norms			
3.2	Provides growth opportunities for staff within the organization			
3.3	Designates time for staff to engage as a team (e.g., discussion meetings, program planning sessions)			

LEADERSHIP & STAFFING

QUALITY STANDARD		Yes	NEXT ACTION	DATE BY
3.4	Strategizes positive experiences surrounding the transitioning of staff (e.g., career changes, new hires, retirements)			

QUALITY INTERACTIONS & RELATIONSHIPS

Items in this category address the ways in which programs foster positive adult-to-child and child-to-child interactions and relationships.

INTERACTIONS & RELATIONSHIPS

QUALITY STANDARD		Yes	NEXT ACTION	DATE BY
Our program...				
1.1	Staff actively engage with children			
1.2	Staff establish caring and trusting relationships with children			
1.3	Staff regard and interact with children as capable and competent learners			
1.4	Staff maintain a positive tone with children, staff, and parents			
1.5	Staff actively listen to children and respond supportively			
1.6	Provides opportunities for one-to-one engagement and guidance with children			
1.7	Staff model pro-social behaviours and conflict resolution skills			
1.8	Provides developmentally appropriate interpersonal skill development opportunities for children (e.g., active listening, conflict resolution, cooperation)			
1.9	Provides opportunities for children to be peer supports and mentors			

PROVIDES A POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE

This category encompasses “look-fors” related to creating a vibrant and intentionally designed program space and fostering children’s sense of belonging.

ATMOSPHERE

QUALITY STANDARD		Yes	NEXT ACTION	DATE BY
1 PROGRAM SPACE				
Our program...				
1.1	Has access to adequate indoor space intentionally set-up to engage children with varying abilities in a range of learning experiences			
1.2	Makes available inclusive, non-biased materials representing a range of abilities, cultures, and communities			
1.3	Provides dedicated quiet spaces for children to use as needed			
1.4	Accesses appropriate, intentionally planned outdoor space with natural elements (e.g., green space, wood-chips, shrubbery)			
1.5	Incorporates natural elements in the indoor environment			
2 BELONGING				
Our program...				
2.1	Prioritizes “fun”			
2.2	Ensures children feel welcome, valued, included, and safe			
2.3	Encourages regular attendance (e.g., 3-5 days/wk) so children access the benefits of the program			
2.4	Incorporates predictable routines so children know what to expect and when			

SAFE AND HEALTHY

This category addresses security and supervision, safety, and health promotion “look-fors” in high quality after-school programs.

SAFE & HEALTHY

QUALITY STANDARD		Yes	NEXT ACTION	DATE BY
1 SECURITY & SUPERVISION				
Our program...				
1.1	Monitors the safe arrival of children to the program (e.g., from school)			
1.2	Has convenient and secure drop-off and pick-up times, locations, and protocols			
1.3	Assures children are only released to authorized people			
1.4	Responds when a child is absent			
1.5	Ensures children are supervised by staff at all times			
1.6	Monitors the safe transitioning of children during the program (e.g., between learning experiences, bathroom monitoring)			
2 SAFETY				
Our program...				
2.1	Inspects and maintains equipment frequently to ensure it complies with compulsory safety standards			
2.2	Staff performs safety checks prior to each use of program space			
3 HEALTH PROMOTION				
Our program...				
3.1	Monitors the physical health and well-being of children			

SAFE & HEALTHY

QUALITY STANDARD		Yes	NEXT ACTION	DATE BY
3.2	Conducts scheduled processes to ensure cleanliness of the program environment following Toronto Public Health requirements			
3.3	Has allergy aware rules and practices in-place			

FOSTERS WELL-BEING & HEALTHY SELF-BELIEFS

Included in this category are items related to nurturing children's identity and positive self-image, providing nourishment and nutrition education, and providing physical activity opportunities.

WELL-BEING & SELF BELIEFS

QUALITY STANDARD	Yes	NEXT ACTION	DATE BY
1 IDENTITY & POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE			
Our program...			
1.1			
1.2			
1.3			
1.4			
2 NUTRITION			
Our program...			
2.1			
2.2			
2.3			
2.4			

WELL-BEING & SELF BELIEFS

QUALITY STANDARD		Yes	NEXT ACTION	DATE BY
2.5	Staff model healthy food choices			
2.6	Staff create learning opportunities on healthy eating through embedded experiences			
2.7	Staff refrain from using food and beverages as reward or punishment, and don't force children to eat or drink			
3 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY				
Our program...				
3.1	Provides a variety of physical activity opportunities in-line with the provincial physical activity target of approximately 30% of daily programming			
3.2	Staff encourage all children to participate to their ability level			
3.3	Staff refrain from providing or withholding physical activity as reward or punishment			
3.4	Staff actively participate in physical activities			

QUALITY PROGRAMMING

This category highlights child-centred programming and “look-fors” related to providing a variety of engaging learning experiences.

QUALITY PROGRAMMING

QUALITY STANDARD		Yes	NEXT ACTION	DATE BY
1 CHILD-CENTRED				
Our program...				
1.1	Engages children in the development of programming			
1.2	Plans learning experiences according to children's specific interests and needs			
1.3	Facilitates children's choice in directing their own learning experiences			
2 VARIETY OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES				
Our program...				
2.1	Offers a variety of developmentally appropriate learning, recreational, and cultural/artistic experiences			
2.2	Implements developmentally appropriate programming delineated for children ages 6-8 and ages 9-12			
2.3	Weaves character development (e.g., morality, sense of equity, justice, and civic duty) through the fabric of all programming			
2.4	Varies structured (e.g., staff initiated) and unstructured (e.g., child initiated) learning experiences			
2.5	Complements in-school learning (rather than duplicates it)			
2.6	Offers homework support			
2.7	Extends learning experiences beyond the program environment (e.g., field trips, outings)			

INTENTIONAL PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

The term *Pedagogy* encompasses philosophies, understandings, and practices surrounding teaching and learning. “Look-fors” in this category are related to supporting learning through a variety of purposeful approaches to planning and implementing learning experiences.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

QUALITY STANDARD		Yes	NEXT ACTION	DATE BY
1 PURPOSEFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCES				
Our program...				
1.1	Prioritizes learning through play			
1.2	Staff tailor learning experiences to suit individual children’s interests and needs			
1.3	Staff use a variety of learning approaches and strategies (e.g., inquiry-based learning, mastery learning, skills-based learning)			
1.4	Staff vary large group, small group, partner, and independent learning experiences			
1.5	Staff connect learning content with skills being developed			
1.6	Staff tier learning plans and experiences to account for multiple ability levels			
1.7	Staff document planned and emergent learning experiences (i.e., in activity plans)			
1.8	Staff share program plans with peers, leaders, parents, and children			

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND INCLUSIVE

Items in this category are related to engaging children and families from a wide variety of communities with a broad range of needs.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE & INCLUSIVE

QUALITY STANDARD		Yes	NEXT ACTION	DATE BY
Our program...				
1.1	Maximizes inclusion and participation of children and families with additional support needs			
1.2	Maintains and pursues physical accessibility			
1.3	Staff engage with and incorporate community groups in programming, and where possible, speak the languages of the communities served			
1.4	Integrates content and materials reflective of the communities' languages and cultures			
1.5	Includes and supports LGBTQ2S and gender independent children and families			

INTEGRATED COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

This category covers “look-fors” related to welcoming parents and families, and considering community engagement and local partnerships to pro-actively build ties to the community.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

QUALITY STANDARD		Yes	NEXT ACTION	DATE BY
1 PARENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION				
Our program...				
1.1	Creates a welcoming atmosphere for families including sole support, grandparent-led, and LGBTQ2S families			
1.2	Regularly communicates with families about the program and their child’s experience via multiple means (e.g., in-person, newsletters, email, and phone)			
1.3	Involves parents, families, and communities in programming (e.g., as volunteers, guest speakers)			
1.4	Provides or connects families with a variety of capacity building resources on parenting (e.g., workshops, support groups, reading materials)			
1.5	Provides opportunities and encourages children to participate in community programs and projects (e.g., volunteer opportunities, civic engagement)			
1.6	Establishes and maintains relationships with community groups and agencies			
2 SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS				
Our program...				
2.1	Partners and maintains positive working relationship with local schools			
2.2	Nurtures positive relationships with school administration, teachers, and school staff around the use of shared space			

EVALUATES EFFECTIVENESS

This category includes “look-fors” related to using evaluation to support program development and staff development.

EVALUATES EFFECTIVENESS

QUALITY STANDARD		Yes	NEXT ACTION	DATE BY
1 EVALUATION FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT				
Our program...				
1.1	Evaluates children’s engagement (e.g., using observations, interviews, questionnaires/surveys)			
1.2	Mobilizes evaluation findings to:			
1.3	-measure the attainment of program goals			
1.4	-identify program strengths and needs			
1.5	-inform ongoing program planning			
1.6	Provides opportunities for community members, parents, staff, and children to voice issues, provide feedback, and engage in problem solving dialogue			
1.7	Shares evaluation results with stakeholders through multiple avenues/channels			
2 EVALUATION FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT				
Our program...				
2.1	Initiates staff performance reviews utilizing various evaluation methods (e.g., observations, self- and other- administered performance assessments) to inform staff professional learning plans			
2.2	Shares performance review results with staff thereby providing ongoing feedback (e.g., strengths and needs)			
2.3	Leadership has the necessary evaluation and assessment skills to support staff professional learning through evaluation			

