

How to Conduct an Internal Assessment Using the School Age Program Quality Assessment (SPQA)

Assessment at-a-glance

- Use with grades Kindergarten through sixth
- At least one hour to observe (two to three hours are recommended)
- Assessment is based on observation and teacher interview
- Some items may not be scored
- At least five children need to be present

Required materials (click on link to access the document)

- [School Age Program Quality Assessment instrument](#)

Supplemental materials (click on links to access the following documents)

- [SPQA Handbook](#) (sample)
- [Supplemental scales](#) (SPQA extended observation scales are optional and not required for use during the assessment) for activity structure, homework help, recreation time, transitions and departure
- [Observation Guide](#)

Purchase/download the materials

- The required materials are available for download free of charge for use at your program at <http://www.cypq.org/downloadpqa>.
- Note: Score sheets can be duplicated.

Conducting the Internal Assessment (start to finish)

1. Learn about the SPQA

- Using the [Program Quality Assessment Professional Development Catalog](#) (PD Catalog), you will have options for professional development/learning articles, videos and other resources where you can learn about the SPQA. If time is limited be sure to view the following:
 - [Michighn QRISECIC School Age PQA Walkthrough](#) webinar
- Read the SPQA cover to cover along with the sample handbook. The more you learn about the quality practices of the SPQA, the more accurate your own internal assessment will be.
- It is recommended that the teaching team from each assessed classroom and the internal assessment team become familiar with the expectations of the SPQA prior to conducting the internal assessment.

2. Prepare to conduct the Internal Assessment

- If time has elapsed since your download and review of the SPQA, re-familiarize yourself with the scale and expectations.
- Gather all materials needed to conduct the observation including a digital device or paper/pencil for note taking, a copy of the sale, and the score sheet.

3. When to conduct the Internal Assessment

- It is best to conduct the assessment when there is one to three hours of uninterrupted time. Ensure the person conducting the assessment can devote this uninterrupted time.
- The internal assessment team should observe program offerings: structured activities that are led by regular staff with the same children over time. Enrichment classes or afterschool clubs that get together at the same time each week for the entire school semester are a great example. Avoid homework help (unless assessing with the supplemental scale on homework help), open gym, unstructured computer lab time, drop-in, etc. Always notify program staff of scheduled observations ahead of time. This is not a test!
- If timing and staff schedules do not allow for full observations, then try to observe at least one hour of programming, divided among internal assessment team members (e.g., three people each observe for 20 minutes, four people each observe for 15 minutes). Vary observation times so that your observations include the beginning, middle and end of different sessions.
- There must be at least five children present.

4. Conduct the Internal Assessment

- **Take ample notes.** Taking notes is extremely helpful for various reasons. First, anecdotal evidence is needed to support each score. Your notes will help you score accurately. If you are reviewing the assessment in order to check your scores, looking back at notes will help you. Finally, note taking will help you and your teachers create goals based on observed data that was written down.
 - As you are taking notes consider the intent of the item when scoring. Follow through and pay attention to an entire sequence of events.
 - Ask questions during the follow-up interview to gather additional information if needed. Questions must be asked exactly as they are written.
- **Be objective.** It might be second nature to score based on what you know your teachers do on a regular basis. However, the SPQA is designed to look at quality in a specific time frame. If the practice is observed during your observation, count it; if it is not observed, do not consider it in scoring decisions.
- **Read each and every indicator of quality carefully.**
 - Refer to the handbook for item specific examples.
- **Read all supplemental information.** Refer to the SPQA Handbook for item specific examples.

5. Score the assessment

- Take notes and score at the end of the observation.
- Scoring tips:
 - If the item assesses children's opportunity for something, score based on whether the opportunity was present or explicitly offered even if some children do not take advantage of the opportunity.
 - Score based on what you see that day, even if there are extenuating circumstances present that affected the scores.
 - If there are two or more staff present, score on whether any one of the staff members do a certain practice; otherwise, focus on the primary staff person.
 - In the SPQA, "some" refers to one or more people, children, opportunities, etc.
 - Use the interview questions to gather any information needed for those items not scored during the observation. Specific interview questions are included for some sections of the SPQA. Ask those questions only and use specific wording provided.

- SPQA is scored on a 5-point scale. Some items can also be marked with an “X” to indicate not observed.
 - Scores of 1,3, and 5 are used (no 2s or 4s).
 - If evidence is present, score in favor of the higher score. Typically, a score of one means that the item was not present during the assessment in contrast to a five which is considered best practice and is observed regularly.
- Optional: Scores may be entered at www.cypq.org to receive an online score report.

6. Review findings

- Conducting a SPQA assessment is only the first step of the process for quality growth. Review your observation with those people responsible for implementing changes.
- It is important to celebrate strengths. Often improvements build upon strengths.
- Review your assessment with your internal assessment team including your Quality Coach and Program Quality Assessor. They can celebrate strengths with you and brainstorm areas for CQI goals/improvement.

7. Next steps

- Ensure everyone has contributed ideas and knows the next steps to take toward improvement.
- When planning for CQI goals, look toward implementing the next level’s indicators.
- Start small. Focus on one indicator at a time.
- Be patient. Do not be discouraged if your initial scores do not meet your expectations. Growth takes time.
- Change what you can and accept those things that are outside of your program’s ability to improve.
- Share your plan for growth/CQI plan with everyone involved on your team.
- Plan to revisit your goals and program’s administrative practices regularly to assess and update as goals are achieved. The CQI process is cyclical as you continuously reflect on your practices and your drive for growth.