

The Afterschool Program Assessment System

APAS is offered exclusively by The National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) at the Wellesley Centers for Women.



What are the benefits of APAS?

- * Helps afterschool programs align program improvement efforts with desired youth outcomes, yet flexible in that the tools can be used together or separately
- * Designed specifically for afterschool programs
- * Research-based, scientifically field-tested tools
- * Based on a menu approach, wherein programs measure those outcomes that fit best with their program design and goals
- * Affordable and user-friendly format
- * Multiple internal and external uses for tracking, monitoring and measuring improvements in program quality and youth program experiences and youth outcomes

What is APAS?

The **Afterschool Program Assessment System (APAS)** helps afterschool programs improve their program quality and reach their desired outcomes for children and youth. APAS is one of the only assessment systems available that helps afterschool programs link quality and youth outcomes together in a comprehensive, flexible and integrated fashion.

APAS includes several measurement tools—the Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes (**SAYO**) completed by staff and teachers, the new SAYO Youth survey and the Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (**APT**).

- **SAYO S & T** – measure changes in intermediary youth outcomes linked with long-term healthy development and educational success (see page 2).
- **SAYO Y** – provides an essential youth perspective on program quality and youth outcomes linked to youth’s future success (see page 2).
- **APT O & Q** – helps programs examine important aspects of program quality linked to the SAYO Outcomes (see page 3).

Background & Development

The **SAYO** and the **APT** tools have been extensively piloted, and scientifically tested. **SAYO** and **APT** have been used by hundreds of afterschool programs in MA, GA, NC, CA, NJ, CT, PA – and Canada. As part of the statewide Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study (MARS) in 2004, links were found between APT program quality and SAYO youth outcomes. Recently links were also found between youth, staff, and teacher perceptions as measured by the SAYO.

The Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes Staff and Teacher Survey

The **SAYO S & T** uses brief pre-participation and post-participation outcome surveys to collect data about youth from regular education teachers and afterschool staff. The **SAYO S & T** are based on a menu approach in which programs collect data on outcomes that are most aligned with their goals for the young people they serve. The **SAYO S & T** are designed for programs serving children from kindergarten through high school.

SAYO S & T Outcome Areas

- Behavior in the Program/Classroom
- Initiative
- Engagement in Learning
- Relations with Adults
- Relations with Peers
- Problem Solving
- Communication Skills
- Homework
- Academic Performance (SAYO T only)

Each outcome area is measured by asking teachers and staff to respond to four or five questions related to observable youth behaviors. These items have been extensively tested and found to work as a single scale that effectively captures the outcome being measured. Teacher and/or staff responses to these surveys can be completed for all participating youth or for a sample of youth in a program.

Youth Survey

The **SAYO Y** uses brief pre-participation and post-participation program quality and youth outcomes surveys to collect data about youth from youth. Research suggests that certain youth experiences and outcomes are critical to youths' future success. In line with this research, the **SAYO Y** is comprised of three surveys measuring youth's experiences in the afterschool program, youth's sense of competence, and youth's future planning and expectations. The **SAYO Y** surveys are based on a menu approach. The **SAYO Y** is designed for programs serving children from 4th grade through high school.

What Does SAYO Y Measure?

- **The Program Experiences Survey (PE)** measures youths' program experiences in six key quality areas: Engagement and enjoyment, choice and autonomy, challenge, perceptions of the social environment, supportive relationships with staff member and responsibility and leadership.
- **Future Expectations (FE):** Measures youths future planning, expectations, aspirations and college planning
- **The Sense of Competence Scales (SC):** Measures youths' sense of competence in Reading, Writing, Math, Science, and getting along with others as a learner

Programs that use **SAYO S, T** and/or **Y** will gain information on how their participants have changed and what gains, if any, they have made over the course of the year. However, as is true with all similar program evaluation research, the results cannot necessarily be attributed to program participation. We encourage those using the **SAYO** to collect additional data on youth which may enable their programs to better understand the ways in which it may be contributing to outcomes. It should be noted that **SAYO** was designed primarily as a program assessment tool which can help programs track changes in youth linked to participation. **SAYO** should not be used as an individual youth diagnostic tool.

The Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT)

The **APT** is a quality assessment tool designed to help programs strengthen practices that research suggests are linked to SAYO outcome areas. The APT includes two tools: The **APT Observation Tool (APT O)**, which focuses on observable program practices; and the **APT Program Questionnaire (APT Q)**, a self-assessment tool which examines those aspects of program quality that occur “behind the scenes,” such as program planning and connections with schools and parents. The **APT** is designed for programs serving children from kindergarten through middle school.

What does the APT Measure?

Learning and Skill Building

- Staff/Programming Stimulates Engagement and Thinking
- Quality of Activities
- Targeted SAYO Skill building/Activities
- Youth are Positively Engaged in Program/Skill Building
- Staff/Program Supports Individualized Needs & Interests
- Opportunities for Responsibility, Autonomy & Leadership

Program Organization and Structure

- Positive Behavior Guidance
- Space is Conducive to Learning
- Varied/Flexible Approaches/Programming
- High Program and Activity Organization
- Connections with Schools
- Program Supports Staff

Supportive Social Environment:

- Welcoming & Inclusive Environment
- Supportive Staff-Youth Relationship
- Positive Peer Relations
- Connections with Families

Sample Items - APT Observation Tool

B. Staff Promote Youth Engagement & Stimulate Thinking	How true?	Notes
Staff are energetic, enthusiastic, and/or upbeat. <i>I=Staff appear distant, bored or “flat” in their demeanor.</i>	1 2 3 4	
Staff are actively engaged in activities with youth (e.g. interacting with groups, or individual youth; providing ongoing facilitation, participating with youth). <i>I=Staff do not engage with youth (e.g. chatting with other staff or engaged in own activity).</i>	1 2 3 4	
Staff encourage youth to share control/responsibility for activity (e.g. Youth help set out materials for art project, youth are encouraged to take the lead in selecting and initiating activities). <i>I=Staff maintain control throughout activity period, resist input from youth, do not seek youth involvement.</i>	1 2 3 4	

New! Informational webinar on APAS is now available. To sign-up, go to www.NIOST.org

Is APAS right for my program?

APAS tools work best when used by:

- * Afterschool programs that serve youth in Grades K through middle school, and K through high school for SAYO S, T & Y.
- * Programs of all sizes and most types
- * Well-established programs (1+ year). It may not be suitable for start-up programs, those experiencing high staff turnover, facility changes and/or major shifts in program focus
- * Programs with regular/consistent programming and youth attendance across a full school year. It may not be appropriate for drop-in, specialized/limited programs (like karate class 2/hrs wk), or those focused exclusively on academic tutoring.

How is APAS different from other assessment tools?

- * Includes outcome areas that research links to success in school and the workplace
- * Gathers data from teachers and after school staff—whereas most other youth outcome tools rely exclusively on youth perspectives
- * Allows programs to focus on assessing specific, observable practices rather than reflecting upon more general quality characteristics.
- * Allows programs to examine how youth are experiencing and participating in the program
- * Results from the Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study found links between APT quality and SAYO S youth outcomes.
- * Includes youth perspective on quality.

For more information on APAS visit

www.niost.org

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How are programs using the APAS system?

- * Comprehensive, self-assessment of program practices by program administrators and multi-level teams
- * Help promoting greater consistency in practices across multiple sites
- * Pinpointing topics for staff development sessions and as a guide for delivering feedback to staff that is concrete and constructive
- * Using pre- and post- assessments to measure change over time
- * Using baseline youth behaviors and staff and teacher perspectives in SAYO S, T and youth perspectives in SAYO Y outcome areas, to aid in program planning
- * Communicating with schools about the needs of individual youth
- * Measuring change over time in youth outcomes areas to track program progress toward goals

I want to use APAS, how do I proceed?

Step 1: Contact a NIOST representative to determine the appropriate training needed for your program(s):

- * SAYO S & T
- * SAYO Y
- * APT O & Q
- * APAS (includes SAYO S, T, Y & APT O & Q)

Step 2: Attend either an APAS training at our annual Boston Summer Seminars, hire a NIOST trainer(s) to conduct (any of the above) trainings at your venue, or take the online SAYO tutorial (a SAYO only option).

Important: NIOST encourages 2 people per site/program to complete training.

Step 3: You're ready to get started!