The Quick CASP

A Summer Learning Program Quality Assessment Tool

NATIONAL SUMMER LEARNING ASSOCIATION

CASP
COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT
OF SUMMER PROGRAMS

CONTENT

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CASP COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF SUMMER PROGRAMS

OVERVIEW OF THE QUICK CASP

What is the Quick CASP?
The Quick CASP is a quality assessment tool developed by the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) in partnership with the Summer Matters Campaign to help summer learning programs continuously improve their program quality.

The assessment indicators are drawn from the Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs (CASP), a set of 80 research-based indicators of program quality developed by the National Summer Learning Association. The 36 indicators selected for the Quick CASP have been identified as critical levers to improving summer program quality, and therefore priority areas for planning and quality improvement.

It's recommended that programs complete the Planning and Management Assessment (pages 4-9 in the Quick CASP), which self-assesses program infrastructure, as well as the Observation Assessment (pages 11-18 in the Quick CASP), which evaluates point-of-service indicators, both integral to a high-quality summer learning program. Though the Observation Assessment can only be used while the program is in session, it is recommended that programs consult these indicators during the planning period. For more information and guidance, consult NSLA's planning guide Summer Starts in September. Get your copy at www.summerstartsinseptember.com.
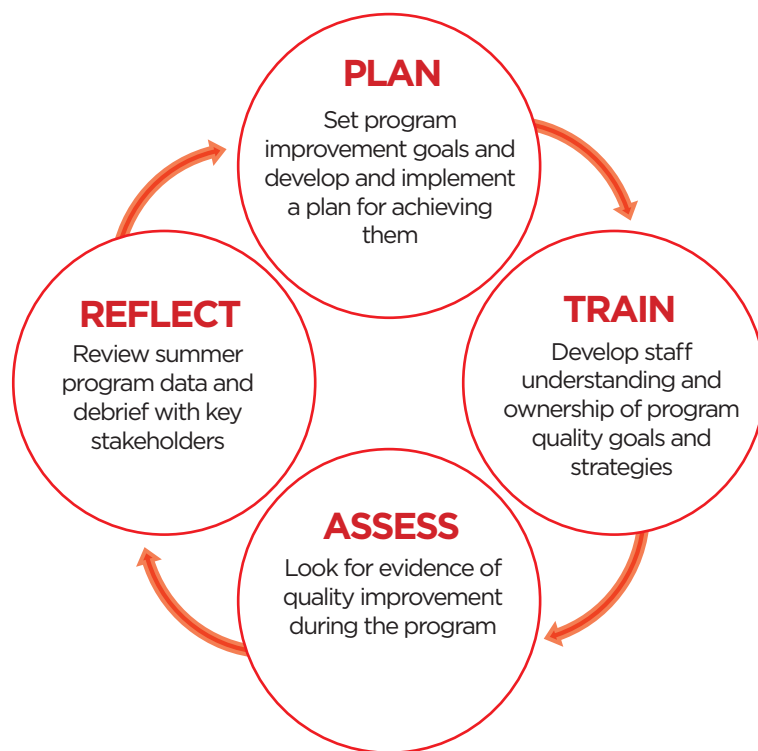
Features of the Quick CASP
The Quick CASP is composed of a program infrastructure assessment, an observation assessment and a quality improvement plan.

1. Planning and Management Assessment – is an assessment that focuses on infrastructure components that are integral to a high-quality summer program. This assessment should be completed by the Program Director/Manager. The scores produced from the Planning and Management Assessment are transferred into a "Program and Management Data Tracker" (page 10 of the Quick CASP) that informs and prioritizes which program improvements should be planned over the next year. The Planning and Management Assessment is located on pages 4-9 of the Quick CASP

2. Observation Assessment – is an observation tool that focuses on the point-of-service quality of the summer program, and completed by a Site Supervisor. The scores are transferred into the *Observation Assessment Data Tracker* (page 19 of the Quick CASP) that informs and prioritize which program improvements should be planned over the next year for next summer. The Observation Assessment is located on pages 11-17 of the Quick CASP.

3. Quality Improvement Cycle - the individual(s) assessing the program should analyze results/scores from both the Planning and Management Assessment and the Observation Assessment, and then write 3-5 quality improvement goals for the upcoming year into the Quality Improvement Plan (template located on page 20 in the Quick CASP). The process of planning, delivering and improving summer learning programs is continuous; just as the summer program ends, planning for the next year should begin. NSLA supports programs and networks to continuously improve their programs through a four-part annual quality improvement cycle. More detailed information about the Quality Improvement Cycle and instructions for completing the Quality Improvement Plan is located in the User's Guide on pages 6 and 7. Creating staff buy-in during this process is crucial to the Quality Improvement Cycle.

Quality Improvement Cycle

PLAN
Set program improvement goals and develop and implement a plan for achieving them

TRAIN
Develop staff understanding and ownership of program quality goals and strategies

ASSESS
Look for evidence of quality improvement during the program

REFLECT
Review summer program data and debrief with key stakeholders

What is the difference between the Quick CASP and the CASP?

• **The CASP -** the Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs (CASP) is a research-based set of 80 indicators and tools designed to support a year-round quality improvement cycle for summer learning programs. The CASP assessment consists of document review, interviews (program director and staff), staff surveys, program observation, a quality report and a quality improvement plan. The CASP assessment needs to be conducted by a trained CASP Assessor. The CASP is a full-service, "premium" summer quality assessment tool offered by NSLA and California-based CASP Assessors.

• **The Quick CASP -** designed as a "freemium" alternative, the Quick CASP is a lighter touch quality assessment tool for summer programs that may not have the benefit of resources/funding to hire an external CASP Assessor or do not have staff trained as CASP Assessors. The Quick CASP consists of two assessments including 36 quality indicators and a quality improvement plan. The Quick CASP does not require training and it may be conducted as a program self-assessment or with the assistance of an external Technical Assistance Provider.

We're interested in getting a complete CASP Assessment of our program. What are our options?

1. Hire an external CASP Assessor - you may consider hiring an external CASP Assessor to conduct an external CASP assessment of your summer program. **Visit the Summer Matters website** (http://summermatters2you.net/) to contact a California-based CASP Assessor who may help you with an assessment. Fees and availability are up to each CASP Assessor.

2. Have your staff trained as CASP Assessors - if you're interested in having your own staff trained as CASP Assessors, contact ASAPconnect (www.asapconnect.org) to set up a CASP Assessor training in your area. Consider sharing the cost of this training with others who may be interested. You might investigate options with your California Department of Education (CDE) After School Division Regional Lead (http://bit.ly/regionalleads).

3. Hire NSLA to conduct a CASP assessment of your summer program - NSLA conducts both small and large-scale CASP assessments of summer programs, usually multiple sites in a district. Contact NSLA for more information, (410) 856-1370.

PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT AND OBSERVATION GUIDELINES

What is the Planning and Management Assessment?
The Planning and Management Assessment (pages 4-9 of the Quick CASP) is an important way to begin the quality improvement process. It's designed to *initiate conversation among program staff* about the program's quality and to match evidence about the program's strength and weaknesses with the tool's rating scale. It should be used before you begin planning for the summer.

What is the Observation Assessment?
Observation is an important component of any continuous improvement cycle. It allows observers to assess how features of program planning and preparation translate at the point of interaction between staff and youth. The Observation Assessment (pages 11-18 of the Quick CASP) allows you to summarize and record observed activities. It's recommended you observe three (3) varied activities during a visit to help the observer gain a broad view of the overall program. This should be completed once while the program is in session.

The indicators in each assessment are drawn from the Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs (CASP), a set of 80 research-based indicators of program quality. The selected indicators have been identified as critical levers to improving summer program quality, and therefore priority areas for planning and quality improvement.

Getting Started with the Planning and Management Assessment
Start the assessment process by rating each indicator and transferring your scores to the *Planning and Management Data Tracker* (page 10 in the Quick CASP) in the "score" column. With any method you use to conduct the survey, be sure to document evidence to back up your scores. Use the notes field under each indicator, the comments field in the data tracker and chart paper or Post-It notes to gather evidence. This will be important to the consensus-making process in the event staff disagree on an indicator score.

Ways to Use the <u>Planning and Management Assessment</u>

    1. *Individual Survey to Discussion:* Complete survey independently, tally results and discuss as a group.

    2. *Small Group Survey to Discussion*: Complete the survey in small groups and have each group report or record their scores to be tallied. Discuss as a group to come to consensus.

    3. *Consensus-Based Survey:* Walk through each indicator as a group and come to real-time consensus on the scores.

Getting Started with the <u>Observation Assessment</u>

    1. Familiarize yourself with the <u>Observation Assessment</u> questions and rating scales before observing the program.

    2. Print and bring the <u>Observation Assessment</u> with you to take notes, but wait to fill in ratings it until you finish observations of at least three activities.

    3. Use the evidence you've collected to score the indicators in the <u>Observation Assessment</u>.

    4. Then, add your scores into the *Observation Assessment Data Tracker* (page 19 in the Quick CASP).

Tips for a Successful Observation

    1. Pick an "average" day. Schedule your observation for a day that is typical to the program. Field trips and special events are important to program quality, but they're not the best representation of the program as a whole.

    2. Put them at ease. Ensure you've prepped staff that why and when you'll be observing the program. Let them know that your observation is not a judgment of individual staff, and that you'll be documenting strengths and recommendations for improvement at the program level. Structure some to give specific positive feedback to staff either during your observation or as a group at the end of the observation.

    3. Plan ahead. Ensure you have a copy of the program schedule for the day or week you will be observing, and make selections to ensure you're observing a representative perspective of the program.

    4. Remain neutral. Sometimes it's tempting to participate in an activity that is going well, or to intervene in an activity that is not. Use your best judgment to ensure that your duties as an assessor come first, and that you focus on making an objective assessment.

Giving Feedback to Staff
After completing an observation, the observer(s) should compile thoughts and deliver some feedback to staff. The purpose of this is to provide staff with immediate feedback on the program, giving them some positive reinforcement for program successes and a few, simple "quick fixes" that can be made that session/ summer for improvement. More information about providing staff feedback after observation is located on page 7 of the User's Guide.

Planning for Improvement: Quality Improvement Plan
Typically, a program should take on 3-5 quality improvements in one year. Once you've identified your priority improvements, use the <u>Quality Improvement Plan Template</u> (page 20 of the Quick CASP) to write in quality improvement goals and brainstorm specific tasks the program will need to complete to realize those improvements.

The Quality Improvement Cycle is explained in more detail on pages 3 of the User's Guide.

DEVELOPING A QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN: GUIDELINES

The Quality Improvement Cycle for the Quick CASP

    • **Fall (PLAN):** We recommend you consider using both the Planning and Management Assessment (pages 4-11 in the Quick CASP) as well as the Observation Assessment (pages 11-17 in the Quick CASP) every year when you begin your planning process in the fall. Use your reflections to prepare a Quality Improvement Plan.

    • **Spring (TRAIN):** During staff training, engage staff in a discussion around the purpose and value of the assessment process. Explain that this is a low-stakes process for the program and staff. Review the Quality Improvement Plan with staff and let them have input on how to best achieve the goals.

    • **Summer (ASSESS):** Use the Observation Assessment to assess your summer program.

    • **Post-Summer Program (REFLECT):** Reflect on your scores from the Observation Assessment, Planning and Management Assessment, and progress made on the Quality Improvement Plan. Begin cycle again.
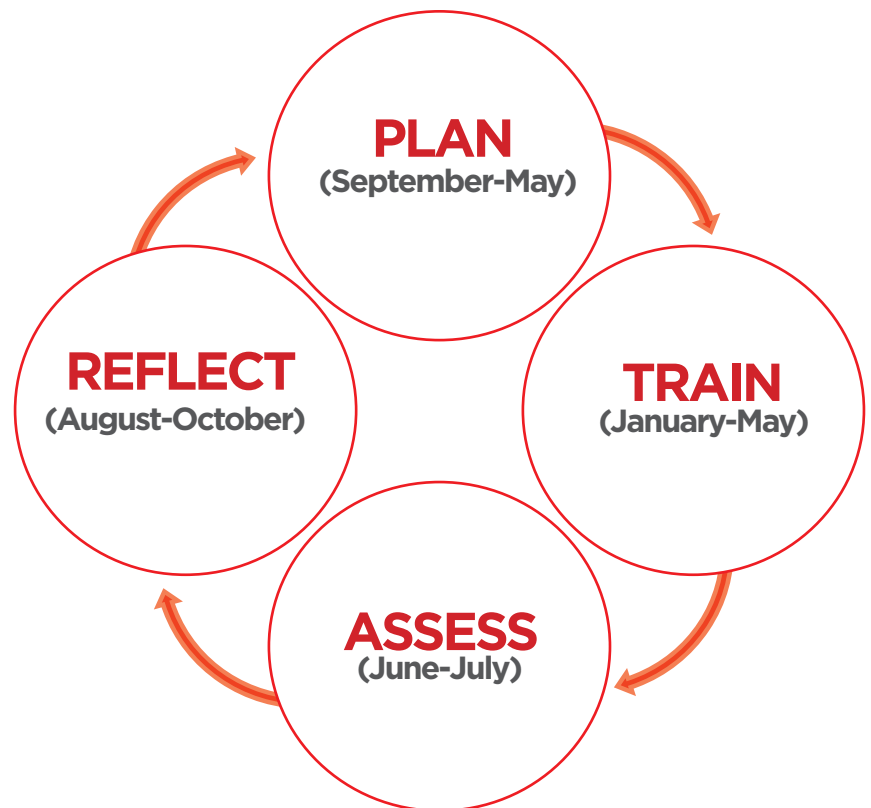
How many Quality Improvements?
Typically, a program should take on 3-5 quality improvements in one year. In some cases, multiple indicators can be grouped together into one improvement goal or area. Trying to implement too many improvements at once becomes overwhelming and often results in no improvements being made. See the sample Quality Improvement Plan on page 7 in the User's Guide.

Writing your Quality Improvement Plan
Use the ratings from your Quick CASP to prioritize areas of improvement for the upcoming summer. For example, if the program scored a 1 or 2 in "Youth Outcome Goals", you might select that indicator to prioritize in your Quality Improvement Plan. Once you've identified your priority improvements, use the Quality Improvement Plan Template (page 20 in the Quick CASP) to write quality improvement goals and brainstorm specific tasks the program will need to complete to realize those improvements. For example, if the program is consistently assessed as a 1 in the indicator "Staff Collaborative Planning," you might identify a quality improvement goal of, "Engage site coordinators and line staff in collaboratively planning special events for the program." Then, discuss and generate the tasks, roles and responsibilities, and timeline that will help the program achieve that goal.

Implementing your Plan
Plans are only as good as the follow-through and care in ensuring the plan is implemented. It's recommended you adopt a Quality Improvement Cycle composed of planning, training, assessment and reflection that becomes a year-round cycle of continuous improvement. Regular check-ins with your staff on the progress and next steps of the plan are integral to the plan's success.

PLAN
(September-May)

TRAIN
(January-May)

ASSESS
(June-July)

REFLECT
(August-October)

Sample Quality Improvement Plan

Create 3-5 Quality Improvement Goals for your program. Use this template as your guide				
Quality Improvement Goal	Quality Indicator (Domain)	Next Steps (Tasks & Activities)	By Whom?	By When?
Goal #1: Set at least two specific, measureable, realistic, time-limited goals for youth outcomes each session that align with the mission and the needs of the youth served.	Youth Outcome Goals (Purpose)	1. Gather feedback from stakeholders. 2. Analyze results and use to write youth outcome goals. 3. Work with staff to develop objectives for each goal. 4. Integrate youth outcome goals into schedule, curriculum, communication, etc. 5. Train staff on youth outcome goals integration	1. Director 2. Director & Program Manager 3. Director & Program Manager 4. Program Manager & Site Coordinator 5. Program Manager & Site Coordinator	1. Dec 2. Jan 3. Feb 4. Mar 5. May
Goal #2: Create a spirit of community and pride among all young people through daily-shared traditions, cheers, competitions, team designations and awards for positive actions or attitudes.	Program Spirit (Unique Program Culture)	1. Gather youth input on spirit activity design that fosters pride and community. 2. Development opening and closing rituals. 3. Professional development on spirit activities.	1. Site Coordinator 2. Site Coordinator 3. Site Coordinator	1. Feb/Mar 2. Apr 3. May

PROVIDING STAFF FEEDBACK AFTER OBSERVATION

You will use the data that you collected in program observation in two ways: first, you will provide quick turnaround feedback to the site-level staff on improvements that can be made during the remainder of the summer program session. Then, you will draft longer term quality improvement goals to drive your planning for next summer's program. It is important that you provide quick feedback to your staff within 48 hours of your program observation. The 48 hour feedback should be based upon the Observation Assessment completed by the Site Supervisor. With 19 different observation indicators, there are too many to acknowledge them all as either strengths or recommendations for improvement. Instead, the Site Supervisor should use indicator scores and notes to identify 3 top strengths and 3 top recommendations for immediate improvement. If your program already has quality improvement goals in place, you may want to start by flagging indicators related to those goals so you're sure to provide feedback on them. Remember that the longer term quality improvement goals will be written into your Quality Improvement Plan (page 20 of the Quick CASP) which will be used to plan over the course of the next year to make broader, deeper quality improvements. When developing the Quality Improvement Plan, both the Planning and Management Assessment and the Observation Assessments are considered.

Staff Feedback Examples

Both program strengths and recommendations for improvement should be connected to indicators you observed and to evidence you collected while on site that day.

Examples of Strength Areas Feedback:
- "I observed numerous examples of staff using debriefing techniques to check for understanding and asking students to make real-world applications of what they learned." (Debriefs/Checks for Understanding)
- " Most activities foster creative development and allow youth to choose active or artistic expressions to convey ideas and build skills. Some examples were Marta's 2nd grade group choosing the Russian Nesting Dolls as their Russian-themed art project, and Jeremy's 5th graders researching, planning and cooking empanadas for their Mexico-themed cooking project." (Creative Thinking)

Examples of Recommendations for Improvement:
- "Provide directions for the activity and discuss how success will be achieved and the level of attention required to complete the activity" (Clear Expectations)
- "Use the program chant more often or develop a chant" (Program Spirit)
- "Incorporate sharing and displaying of youth work into all activities" (Youth Produced Work)
- "Little to no debriefing or checks for learning across activities." Make a note to add this to our next staff development meeting agenda! (Debriefs/Checks for Understanding)

Caution on Recommendations for Improvement When Developing 48-Hour Feedback

Think in terms of tweaks, not overhauls, easy, quick fixes that staff can make during the program session. Also, if you're sharing out with the entire staff, be sure to remove staff members' names from the report to avoid embarrassment.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Summer Starts in September: A Comprehensive Planning Guide for Summer Learning Programs
- Building on more than 20 years of experience in high-quality summer learning, Summer Starts in September provides everything program directors/managers need to plan their summer program. Online companion guides provide guidance for training summer staff, assessing a summer program, and reflecting upon a summer program in order to initiate planning for the upcoming year. Information about this guide can be found at www.summerstartsinseptember.com.

Summer Matters: Technical Assistance Manual
- The Summer Matters Technical Assistance Manual is a series of guides that summer program TA providers can reference to provide technical assistance for summer program directors/managers. Based on the National Summer Learning Association Quality Improvement Cycle, online guides are provided for assisting programs in planning for programs, training staff, assessing programs, and reflecting on programs. These guides can be accessed at http://bit.ly/summertamanual

Full Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs (CASP)
- NSLA conducts CASP assessments of single or multi-site summer programs. Contact NSLA for more information at (410) 856-1370.
- If you're interested in having your staff trained as CASP Assessors, contact ASAP Connect (408)-453-6647) to set up a CASP Assessor training in your area. Consider diffusing/sharing the cost of this training with others who may be interested in your region. You might investigate options with your California Department of Education After School Division Regional Lead.

Summer Matters Website
- Summer Matters is the first-ever statewide campaign focused on creating and expanding access to high quality summer learning opportunities for all California students. Find out more on their website, http://summermatters2you.net/summer-matters-campaign/.

NSLA Website
- The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) is the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities. NSLA recognizes and disseminates what works, offers expertise and support for programs and communities, and advocates for summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education. NSLA's work is driven by the belief that all children and youth deserve high-quality summer learning experiences that will help them succeed in college, career, and life. For more information, visit www.summerlearning.org.