8 Qualities to Promote Youth Engagement: Assessment Tool

Using the Indicator Framework and Assessment Tool

The Assessment Tool is intended as a starting point for reflection and discussion amongst a planning team or organizational stakeholders (including youth and adults). Create space for celebration of practices as well as critical voices or challenges. If only used as a simple checklist without collaborative discussion, these worksheets will not be effective, resulting in inaccurate assumptions that could negatively affect the process/project.

Getting Started

- Form a team (of youth and adults) to champion youth engagement in your context, or gather the key stakeholders in your project or organization
- Dedicate time to use the Assessment Tools together at key points throughout your process: for example, at the beginning of a new initiative or phase, at a phase that is particularly challenging, after a phase of activity is over, or at a time where momentum has decreased, etc.
- Use the Assessment Tools to record your discussions and set goals for improving engagement practices. Start small and prioritize the areas you would like to work on. Some of these indicators may not be relevant to your program, or to your current phase of activity.
- Recognize strengths, identify gaps and select areas for improving youth engagement. No program is ever perfect, nor does any process stay static – there will always be need for change, adaptation, and improvement throughout the process

For convenience,
print the Assessment Tools double-sided
to create two-sided worksheets.

8 Qualities to Promote Youth Engagement
1) Physical and psychological safety

How well does your school/organization do the following:	1 = Poor		3 = Average		5 = Excellent	
Visually display group guidelines/values developed by youth and adults together	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Represent diversity in physical space, in resources, and in leadership	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Use community building activities to establish relationships, trust, and belonging	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Create youth friendly hangouts, where youth have input on the physical space (on what is included, how it is arranged, and how it looks)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Create space configurations that accommodate different needs (collaboration, independence, physical activity)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Ensure physical safety free of violence and/or unhealthy environmental conditions (location, room set-up, activities, materials, transportation to and from)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Create opportunities to have fun and explore interests	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Encourage and accept multiple ways to participate (discussion, writing, art, role play, listening, research, presentation…etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Offer adult role modeling, supportive youth-adult relationships, and integrated youth-adult activities	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Recognize strengths, contributions, efforts and skills	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

See Discussion Questions on reverse.

Discussion Questions
1) Physical and psychological safety

Current areas of strength: Are there any shining examples of physical and psychological safety in your organization/program?

Priority area(s) for improvement: What is one thing you want to start doing right away to improve physical and psychological safety?

Short-term goals to improve the quality of safety:

Long-term goals to improve the quality of safety:

8 Qualities to Promote Youth Engagement
2) Appropriate structure

How well does your school/organization do the following:	1 = Poor		3 = Average		5 = Excellent	
Set clear expectations and appropriate boundaries, written and agreed upon by youth and adults alike	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Provide adult supervision and support where required	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Offer developmentally and culturally appropriate activities	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Intentionally design activities to meet program outcomes	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Provide a facilitation team with experts in youth engagement practices	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Create opportunities for less-structured casual socializing and relationship building	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Show flexibility in response to changing interests, needs, ideas and contexts	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

See Discussion Questions on reverse.

Discussion Questions
2) Appropriate structure

Current areas of strength: Are there any shining examples of appropriate structure in your organization/program?

Priority area(s) for improvement: What is one thing you want to start doing right away to improve structure?

Short-term goals to related to appropriate structure:

Long-term goals to related to appropriate structure:

8 Qualities to Promote Youth Engagement
3) Supportive relationships

How well does your school/organization do the following:	1 = Poor		3 = Average		5 = Excellent	
Create opportunities for youth and adults to work together on common goals	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Share leadership and accountability with young people?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Demonstrate concern and support for young people	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Offer positive role models for young people to interact with	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Create opportunities for collaboration / teamwork	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Foster peer support	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Support opportunities to develop sustained, long-term relationships	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

See Discussion Questions on reverse.

Discussion Questions
3) Supportive relationships

Current areas of strength: Are there any shining examples of supportive adult-youth relationships in your organization/program?

Priority area(s) for improvement: What is one thing you want to start doing right away to improve supportive adult-youth relationships?

Short-term goals related to supportive adult-youth relationships:

Long-term goals related to supportive youth-adult relationships:

8 Qualities to Promote Youth Engagement
4) Opportunities to belong

How well does your school/organization do the following:	1 = Poor	3 = Average		5 = Excellent		
Represent diversity in physical space, in resources, and in leadership	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Greet, welcome and care for all students/participants	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Create meaningful roles for young people and adults	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Utilize activities that will help people learn names	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Recognize attempts, achievements and contributions (certificates, letters, opportunities to present, "warm fuzzies" – kind messages)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Demonstrate appreciation and encouragement of youth voice (visible methods of recording, acknowledging, and responding to youth contribution)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Practice community building activities that help build relationships and belonging	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

See Discussion Questions on reverse.

Discussion Questions
4) Opportunities to belong

Current areas of strength: Are there any shining examples of opportunities to belong in your organization/program?

Priority area(s) for improvement: What is one thing you want to start doing right away to improve opportunities to belong?

Short-term goals to improve belonging:

Long-term goals to improve belonging:

8 Qualities to Promote Youth Engagement
5) Positive social norms

How well does your school/organization do the following:	1 = Poor	3 = Average		5 = Excellent		
Model positive behaviours	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Offer youth leaders that model positive behaviours	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Express high expectations of young people and their capabilities (expecting the best (behaviour and skill level), rather than assuming otherwise)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Express high expectations of adult behaviours (adults are held to account for the same behaviours young people are)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Display group guidelines and values developed by youth and adults together	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Regularly revisit group guidelines and values: clarify, adapt and discuss	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Provide opportunities to critique, challenge or adapt social norms	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Create opportunities to explore diverse life situations, viewpoints, and cultures	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Offer opportunities for peer support, leadership and collaboration	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

See Discussion Questions on reverse.

Discussion Questions
5) Positive social norms

Current areas of strength: Are there any shining examples of positive social norms in your organization/program?

Priority area(s) for improvement: What is one thing you want to start doing right away to support positive social norms?

Short-term goals related to positive social norms in our organization/program:

Long-term goals related to positive social norms in our organization/program:

8 Qualities to Promote Youth Engagement
6) Support for efficacy and mattering

How well does your school/organization do the following:	1 = Poor	3 = Average		5 = Excellent		
Acknowledge and prioritize youth voice (visible methods of recording, acknowledging, and responding to youth contributions)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Provide activities and projects that are focused outside the self (i.e. community contribution, social justice, social action)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Create opportunities for meaningful community contribution	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Develop programming that supports young people's program goals and objectives	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Share leadership and accountability with young people	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Support youth-driven program goals and activities	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Provide activities and processes that recognize diversity of perspective, experience, and abilities	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Support youth to create recommendations, product or messages to validate and share their contributions	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Demonstrate that learning that is occurring; opportunities to reflect and practice new knowledge/skills	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

See Discussion Questions on reverse.

Discussion Questions
6) Support for efficacy and mattering

Current areas of strength: Are there any shining examples of supporting efficacy and mattering in your organization/program?

Priority area(s) for improvement: What is one thing you want to start doing right away to support efficacy and mattering?

Short-term goals related to efficacy and mattering:

Long-term goals related to efficacy and mattering:

8 Qualities to Promote Youth Engagement
7) Opportunities for skill building

How well does your school/organization do the following:	1 = Poor		3 = Average		5 = Excellent	
Offer opportunities for knowledge inquiry and exchange (such as Participatory Action Research, or the YDM cycle)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Create opportunities for young people to code and analyze information and results	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Provide physical, fun and interactive activities to address different learning styles	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Utilize and encourage diverse strategies of communication and contribution (discussion, writing, art, games, role playing)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Offer engaging/interesting activities and issues that are meaningful to young people	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Create opportunities to develop life skills such as teamwork, problem solving, and communication skills	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Provide challenging age-appropriate activities	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Opportunities for experiential learning	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Create opportunities for internships/mentorships	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

See Discussion Questions on reverse.

Discussion Questions
7) Opportunities for skill building

Current areas of strength: Are there any shining examples of skill building opportunities in your program/organization?

Priority area(s) for improvement: What is one thing you want to start doing right away to improve skill building opportunities?

Short-term goals related to skill building opportunities:

Long-term goals related to skill building opportunities:

8 Qualities to Promote Youth Engagement
8) Integration of family, school and community efforts

How well does your school/organization do the following:	1 = Poor	3 = Average		5 = Excellent		
Provide activities and opportunities for parent, family, and/or caregiver involvement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Offer activities and opportunities to connect with other programs, organizations, and community members (research in the community, workshops/presentations, collaborative projects…etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Encourage youth voice and leadership to establish school-community connections and collaboration	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Create opportunities for meaningful community contribution (social justice, civic engagement, volunteering)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Offer opportunities to explore and interact with community outside designated program location (field trips, visits to community partners, site seeing…)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Collaborate with other community organizations/schools in order to maximize resources and address issues (bullying, substance abuse…) as a community	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

See Discussion Questions on reverse.

Discussion Questions
8) Integration of family, school and community efforts

Current areas of strength: Are there any shining examples of integrating family, school and community efforts in your program/organization?

Priority area(s) for improvement: What is one thing you want to start doing right away to improve integration of family, school and community?

Short-term goals related to integration:

Long-term goals related to integration: