

Elements of Quality

This *Elements of Quality* document is a resource for 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) projects to use throughout the continuous improvement process. This document describes seven Elements of Quality which are found in afterschool programs where students make significant gains in the development of social and academic skills. This document also includes suggested strategies and best practices that can be implemented in 21st CCLC programs which are aligned to the identified Elements of Quality.

The Elements of Quality include:

Administration

Uses well-developed systems and sound management to support and enhance program administration and delivery.

Relationships

Develops, nurtures, and maintains positive relationships and interactions among afterschool staff, students, families, school-day staff, and community members.

Family Partnerships

Fosters and sustains strong partnerships with families through positive and relevant interactions with program staff.

School/Community Collaboration

Establishes and maintains positive relationships and coordinated linkages with school staff and community partners to support student success.

Environment, Safety & Wellness of Students

Collaborates with the school to provide an adequate and secure physical space, as well as a safe, healthy, inclusive, and nurturing environment.

Programming

Provides well-rounded experiential learning opportunities to support each student's physical, social, and cognitive growth, including skill building and mastery activities aligned with and providing enrichment to school district content standards.

Continuous Improvement

Utilizes processes of evaluation for the purpose of continuous improvement and accountability.

Three overarching goals of Nebraska 21st Century Community Learning Centers are to:

- 1. Improve student learning performance in one or more core academic areas,*
- 2. Increase student social benefits and positive behavioral changes, and*
- 3. Increase family and community engagement in supporting students' education.*

Compiled by Nebraska 21st Century Community Learning Center Staff.

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Elements of Quality: Guidance for Nebraska 21st Century Community Learning Center Grantees

This tool, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) **Elements of Quality**, was compiled to provide guidance to projects as they strive to continuously improve program quality. A quality program reflects the three goals for 21st CCLC:

- Improved student learning performance in one or more core academic areas,
- Increased student social benefits and positive behavioral changes, and
- Increased family and community engagement in supporting students' education.

The seven identified **Elements of Quality** and their definitions are located on the cover page of this document. On the following pages, each of the Elements is represented in a table. On the left-hand side of the table are items from the *Observations for Quality After-School Programming* document. (This tool was developed for use by local 21st CCLC evaluators and is detailed in the *Evaluation Guidebook*.) On the right-hand side of the table are listed **Indicators**, or best practices and strategies. These Indicators have been aligned with the observation items to facilitate a practical, accessible document for use by Nebraska 21st CCLC project directors and staff in planning for program improvement. It is important to note that this aligned placement does not represent a one-to-one correspondence or an exact measure of the observation item. Rather, it is a listing of researched-based strategies and best practices intended to assist in planning for continuous improvement. The Indicators are not an all-inclusive list; there may be other innovative practices local projects utilize to improve their programs.

The *Elements of Quality* document may be used for guidance in several ways:

- In the continuous improvement process, including grantee action plans,
- To contribute to the design of a new program, and
- To plan for staff development.

The Indicators are not 21st CCLC grant requirements, but rather a resource to provide opportunity for reflection and improvement. The strategies and best practices identified throughout the document are designed to be a work in progress and are subject to updating as new research is available, or feedback conveys the need.

The identification and selection of these quality Elements and Indicators was based on a review of national research and national assessment tools.

The latest version of this document is posted on the My21stCCLC website, <http://21stcclc.myelearning.org> (Content→ Program Quality→ Elements of Quality).

Administration		Uses well developed systems and sound management to support and enhance program administration and delivery
A1	The administration provides sound management of the program consistent with its mission and philosophy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops and utilizes a management team (e.g., project director, school administrator and staff, community partners, local evaluator) which regularly meets to guide decision making and program administration • Develops a written mission statement to address the three overarching 21st CCLC goals with management team members, school staff, community partners, parents, and students • Develops and implements policies in consultation with the school to promote well-defined, systematic approaches to two-way communication between key stakeholders regarding records, schedules, and special events • Uses management team to provide leadership to recruit, screen, hire, and orient qualified staff and substitute staff • Develops handbooks containing policies and procedures for staff and parents in consultation with school • Schedules staff hours, program hours and days, work plans, budgets, school building usage, record and information sharing, and supplies according to the program mission and in coordination with the school • Exhibits sound financial management with written policies and procedures, timely reporting, appropriate record keeping and program accountability • Recruits and serves eligible students who reflect the building demographics (e.g., an equal or greater percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch compared to the school building)
A2	Program policies and procedures are responsive to the needs of students and families in the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops and implements policies and procedures that support a cooperative, respectful relationship between school day and afterschool program staff, and provides a seamless learning day for students and their families • Uses a variety of strategies to reach and serve diverse populations • Schedules hours, days of operation, and activities considering the needs of students/families and school events • Implements a process for regularly gathering student and family input • Develops policies and procedures to foster family engagement and connection to the program and the school to support student learning • Develops policies and procedures to ensure systematic approaches to supporting student learning throughout program activities • Uses formative and summative evaluation data to continuously make program improvements
A3	Program policies and procedures are in place and are practiced as appropriate to support the safety of the students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains and displays current program schedules with room numbers to identify where students are located during program hours • Develops policies and procedures consistent with school day to ensure supervision for the safety of students • Develops policies and procedures to ensure safe staff: student ratios appropriate to age of students and activities implemented • Develops a system to ensure that safety drills are practiced in the after school program (fire, tornado, dangerous person in the building, etc.) • Conducts background checks for all staff and in coordination with school policies • Develops a procedure to check equipment and the environment to regularly monitor for, and eliminate, hazards

Administration		Uses well developed systems and sound management to support and enhance program administration and delivery
A4	Program policies and procedures are in place to protect and enhance the health and wellness of all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops procedures to incorporate school day health policies and the individual health plans of students served in the program • Develops and shares health policies coordinated with the school to discourage attendance of students or staff who are ill • Uses a separate space where students who become ill while attending the program wait to have their health needs met • Develops a policy to dispense medications in the after school program by qualified staff who work in coordination with school day staff responsible for medications • Establishes procedures and designates responders for injuries and other emergencies
A5	Program policies encourage student attendance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops policies and procedures addressing attendance and participation expectations or guidelines in coordination with the school and partners if appropriate • Communicates with families the importance of attendance in ways that are meaningful to them • Develops procedures to respond to absent students in coordination with the school • Utilizes a variety of strategies to encourage regular attendance, such as recognition, praise, or attendance goals • Shares evaluation data with all stakeholders which demonstrates that attendance and achievement are related
A6	Program practices and policies support retaining students in the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops, in consultation with the school, policies and practices aimed at positive behavioral strategies and with diminished likelihood of students being expelled or removed from the program • Works closely with school staff to support students with special needs and to align programming to best fit the needs of each student
A7	Program practices and policies ensure staff to student ratios not to exceed 1:15 and very few whole group activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops policies and practices to maintain appropriate ratios for the ages and abilities of students: for kindergarten (1:8-10), for grades 1-12 (1:12-15) and limited or no large group activities • Maintains a list of substitute staff • Uses small groups for facilitation of most activities • Considers the complexity, difficulty and level of risk of activities when planning staff ratios
A8	Staff are professionally qualified to work with students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retains staff which meet NAA guidelines for directors and teachers • Directors: Bachelors or associates degree in related field, 3 credits child-youth development, 3 credits administration; OR two years experience, bachelors degree in related field and 12 credit hours (child/youth development, administration, and school age care programming) • Staff who teach: Bachelors degree and 3 credits child-youth development; OR 6 months experience, associates degree or 2 years of college, and 3 credits child-youth development; OR 18 months experience, high school or GED, and 6 credits child-youth development and school age care programming. • At a minimum, must meet all Nebraska licensure standards
A9	Staff and volunteer/ community partners are provided an orientation and training prior to beginning to work with students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops opportunity for new staff, community partners or volunteers to participate in an orientation to provide an overview of program mission and goals, program schedules, behavior management strategies, safety procedures, and other necessary information • Develops and provides written job descriptions/expectations • Develops process for sharing critical information with substitute staff (such as health needs, permission to pick up child, etc.)

Administration		Uses well developed systems and sound management to support and enhance program administration and delivery
A10	Staff receive appropriate support to make their work experience positive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compensates and supports staff with competitive wages, benefits, and positive working conditions • Schedules planning time, staff meeting time, and time to coordinate with school day teachers • Provides opportunities to recognize accomplishments • Establishes procedures to problem solve to address concerns
A11	Staff are provided professional development to enhance their capacity to work with all students and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a staff development plan based on assessment of needs, interests, evaluation findings • Responds quickly to identify and obtain training to support emerging needs (new refugee families moving into community, new type of health need for a student) • Coordinates staff development offerings with principal and community partners • Schedules staff training time with school day teachers to specifically enhance coordination with school day curriculum, grade level content standards, sharing to improve homework processes and support, and to coordinate efforts related to school improvement • Supervises, appraises, and provides both informal and formal continuous improvement feedback on staff performance • Utilizes a variety of formats and strategies to better meet the professional development needs of adult learners
A12	A system is developed to ensure that school staff, program staff, and students provide input to plan and implement activities consistent with the program's mission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops policies and schedules to provide adequate time and resources for program and school staff to co-construct plans, based upon evaluation findings, student interests and parent input • Develops policies to ensure that activities provide intentional, experiential learning experiences consistent with the school and community's expectations and identified needs, including student preferences • Offers leadership to students or student groups in both planning and implementing activities
A13	A system is used to ensure there are sufficient materials to support program activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secures appropriate and adequate commitment of resources from principal (facility usage, storage, office space) • Ensures supplies are well organized, inventoried, and accessible • Ensures supplies are appropriate and developmentally suitable for students
A14	Administration, program staff, school staff, parents, students and community partners evaluate the program and make recommendations about continuous improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements 21st CCLC evaluation process and provides timely submissions of data and reports • Utilizes a qualified, external local evaluator to conduct informal site observations in the fall and formal observations/ratings at 100% of sites each winter, as well as to help with interpreting and sharing evaluation results with key stakeholders • Collects survey data from key stakeholders with return rates of at least 90% for teacher surveys, collaboration surveys with return rates of at least 90%, parent surveys with return rates of at least 70%, and student surveys with return rates of at least 80%. • Convenes a management team (or leadership team) regularly to review formative and summative evaluation findings and to identify strategies to continuously improve the program • Shares evaluation results with the school, family, and community

Relationships		Develops, nurtures, and maintains positive relationships and interactions among staff, students, families, school staff, and community members.
R1	Staff interactions with students are characterized by warmth, respect, and appreciation for their efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses positive communication consistently • Recognizes student work by posting displays throughout the program space • Models affirmation through smiling, praising, respecting and valuing students and their efforts • Listens and respects student conversation; uses their names
R2	Staff use positive behavior management strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently models and teaches behavior expectations for students • Provides positive behavior and intervention response strategies • Recognizes students demonstrating positive behaviors • Assists students to appropriately resolve disputes
R3	Staff use intentional strategies to foster peer-to-peer relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses an evidence-based curriculum aimed at strengthening peer relationships • Uses cooperative, not competitive games and activities • Responds quickly to situations of negative interactions and provides support to students to problem solve together
R4	Staff are actively engaged with students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guides and facilitates learning in small groups and limits the number of large group activities • Responds with interest to students
R5	Staff interactions with each other relate to the goals of the program, and are characterized by warmth, respect, and reflect appropriate modeling for students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides training to staff to use behavioral modeling as a social and learning strategy • Uses staff meetings and shared planning time regularly in order to provide an appropriate time and place for staff to work together and to minimize staff need to share lesson planning during program hours • Encourages staff teamwork and mutual support • Cooperates and compromises to model problem solving
R6	Staff-to-student ratios permit staff to meet the individual needs of students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures appropriate staff to student ratios, and group sizes that are safe and appropriate to the age and activity (see A7 Page 3) • Uses small group activities most of the time with very few large group activities
R7	Staff encourage students to make choices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathers input from students regarding activities that interest them • Ensures students have a selection of activities available • Uses lesson and activity planning formats with spaces for optional activities
R8	Staff reflect the language and diversity of the students in the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruits from among families for new hires • Invites representatives from various cultures to participate as volunteers or to share their experiences • Provides activities which honor the language and cultures of the students • Provides training to staff to support effectively engaging families from diverse economic, social, and cultural backgrounds
R9	Students interact positively with each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides opportunities for students to work together to accomplish projects • Responds quickly to situations of negative interactions and provides support to students to problem solve together • Connects new students to others
R10	Students interact positively with staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides opportunities for students to work collaboratively with staff to plan, review, and gain leadership skills in helping to implement activities • Models, explains and role plays appropriate interactions with students
R11	Staff are effective in engaging and positively interacting with all parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages equally across all social and economic groups • Shares positive messages with parents much more often than identifying a specific problem or incident • Listens to parents, responds or refers family when a need is expressed

Family Partnerships ¹ The word parent means any adult care giver		Fosters and sustains strong partnerships with families through positive and relevant interactions with program staff.
F1	All parents ¹ and visitors are greeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greets or acknowledges each visitor or family member, with a word or gesture, using their name, when possible • Provides new families with orientation to learn about the program (staff or other family representatives could do this)
F2	Staff share relevant student information with parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides an area where parents receive information or pick up their student • Posts information useful to parents (translated if necessary) in a prominent, convenient place • Respects confidentiality; encourages family to share by listening attentively, or steps to a quiet space, as needed • Makes a regular effort to share positive news with each family about their child • Seeks family input on their preferred method of communication
F3	Parents share relevant information about their child with program staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a systematic, intentional opportunity for parents to share information with program staff • Responds to family needs flexibly, as they develop, and in a timely manner (staff may step outside into hallway to quietly talk with family and another staff member continues activity, or family member may be given opportunity to write a note, etc.) • Ensures there are systematic opportunities for parents to share relevant information about their child with program staff survey and other evaluative information from all parents
F4	The program and/or school create a welcoming climate for parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides friendly signs that welcome and explain the program • Develops awareness and skills of welcoming behaviors in all staff (recognize visitors, provide information in usable modes) • Provides opportunities for staff and families to meet face to face, with bilingual speakers available, as necessary, at the school or in the community • Assigns at least one staff member the responsibility of considering families' perspective, when plans or decisions are made • Respects and protects the rights and privacy of students and their families • Uses resources to observe and rate the climate of the school (e.g., Beyond the Bake Sale)
F5	Information about the program is shared regularly with parents in multiple ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a systematic, intentional opportunity for parents to share information with program staff • Shares information useful to parents in multiple ways (posts, sends home, uploads to school website, newsletter, verbally) • Communicates schedules, special events and goals of the program to families in their preferred language • Provides a handbook for families, including policies and procedures, staff names and how to reach the program
F6	Staff encourage parental involvement in the program or school in a variety of meaningful ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asks parents to describe meaningful opportunities for partnership • Provides training to staff on types of meaningful involvement • Develops and posts examples of meaningful family engagement (e.g., www.pta.org, 100 Ways to Help Your Child & School Succeed) • Invites families to attend child's performance events and to observe or participate at their comfort level, at any time • Considers families work schedules, transportation needs, etc. when planning activities

Family Partnerships ¹ The word parent means any adult care giver		Fosters and sustains strong partnerships with families through positive and relevant interactions with program staff.
F7	Staff provide, or connect parents to, opportunities designed to engage parents in supporting student learning at home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses student learning with parent(s) at pick up time • Shares learning resources or materials (e.g., Family Math) • Facilitates opportunities for parents to gain a better understanding of what each child is learning in school, showing the connection between school and after school experiences • Displays child's work, where student may explain it to the family, to connect them to the learning experiences • Assigns a simple homework task that would be a daily application of a new learning, to include the family • Provides or connects family members to English Language Learner opportunities, as appropriate, if requested
F8	A representative group of parents are included in shared decision making on key issues related to student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides parents with adequate information and sufficient notice to allow them to be prepared to contribute • Recruits parents to participate on regularly meeting advisory councils or planning committees • Seeks parent input on decisions which could impact student learning • Selects representative parents – some with older children, some with younger, representing the diversity of families in the school
F9	All parents evaluate the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtains survey and other evaluative information from all parents • Maintains a suggestion box or other method to receive suggestions for improving the program
F10	Families are provided information about community resources to meet the needs of students and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to parent needs flexibly and confidentially as they develop (staff member steps outside into hallway to quietly talk with parent and has another staff member continue activity with students) • Distributes to staff and parents general information on community resources that serve the cultural, recreational, academic, health, social and other needs of families within the community • Seeks and engages community resources to meet the needs of specific families • Helps families to overcome barriers to services, (i.e. language, application forms) • Collaborates with community agencies providing support services for families and adult learning opportunities, enabling parents to more fully participate in supporting children's education

School/Community Collaboration		Establishes and maintains positive relationships and coordinated linkages with school staff and community partners to support student success.
S1	Program staff and school staff meet regularly to share information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares strategies and resources to support student's learning and development • Coordinates the use of space in the building • Maintains and improves communication processes • Facilitates, with school principal and community, staff development opportunities as needed for after-school and school-day staff to interact regarding curriculum, strategies, study groups, school goals, or individual student needs • Creates processes to share needed information, (i.e. attendance, special needs, family needs, academic and behavioral goals) • Maintains regular, two-way communication with school administration, especially regarding schedules, processes and procedures, student needs and expectations, practicing confidentiality • Attends school staff meetings, parent conferences and other committee meetings
S2	At least one program staff member regularly participates in teacher staff or planning meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigns a site staff to be a liaison to school day program • Collaborates with school day team level meetings or general staff meetings • Arranges observations or planning sessions as needed for developing special strategies • Coordinates special events and calendars of afterschool with school day
S3	The site supervisor is provided space at the school for lesson planning, communications, and data management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides space at the school for lesson planning • Receives and distributes mail or handouts and phone calls as all staff do • Uses a school email address, and receives school notices • Receives staff handbook • Provides computer and software access needed for data management
S4	Program staff and school staff work together to ensure that after school activities enhance and complement the school curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports state and local performance standards and benchmarks, as well as local school improvement goals, by using interactive learning experiences which embed academics • Requests assistance from school staff to plan interactive, age-appropriate experiences or strategies to embed school objectives into after-school experiences • Receives suggestions from school staff regarding referrals, materials, special needs of students • Uses positive behavior supports which reflect the school day practices and expectations • Posts projects of students in after school in places that can be observed by all • Coordinates activities, such as field trips or offerings in the community, so the learning is extended (example, 4th grade is going to Nebraska History site, then after school does project to enhance that experience)
S5	The school and program regularly share staff development offerings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receives communication about scheduling of professional development opportunities from the school to ensure that there is a process for after school staff to participate, if appropriate • Makes adjustments in staff schedules, or plans subs, or uses flexible hours for staff development, to accommodate more staff • Participates with school staff in activities for growth on a regular basis, to increase the opportunity for communication and collaboration • Participates in staff development opportunities, as determined by the project director and the principal, which are necessary for all staff, such as conflict resolution, first aid, behavior response, or other study groups or staff development related to school improvement goals, etc. • Cooperatively develops job descriptions and appraisal and recognition for staff

School/Community Collaboration		Establishes and maintains positive relationships and coordinated linkages with school staff and community partners to support student success.
S6	The school and program share reasonable access to all spaces in the school building.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secures commitment of resources, space, bulletin boards, storage, computer facilities, library • Receives advance notice when space needs to be changed • Observes procedures for sharing of materials and space • Accesses space as detailed in E 1
S7	The school and program share in the process of recruiting and hiring staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruits from among families for new hires • Includes at least the building principal or designee for posting jobs, arranging interviews, and hiring staff • Attempts to combine positions, when possible, to offer a part-time after school position to a school staff who is part-time or vice versa to promote continuity
S8	At least one program staff member participates on the school improvement team or key leadership council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans arrangements so that after-school representation is possible, by timing the scheduling or provision of a substitute, etc. • Develops a process for sharing information and gathering input that is two-way • Communicates school team information and decisions with after-school staff in a timely and organized method
S9	The school, community, and program collaborate to ensure that materials, displays, and activities reflect the diversity in the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invites representatives from various cultures to participate as volunteers, sharing their culture • Uses literature and activities which honor the languages and cultures of the students • Reflects community events by incorporating them into activities , including encouraging students to volunteer • Reflects the culture of students and their families by items and posters displayed
S10	Responsibility for student learning and development is a collaborative enterprise among parents or families, school staff, program staff, and community members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates effectively among program staff, school staff and families regarding facilities, resources, curriculum expectations, behavior expectations, homework plans, and strategies for learning • Creates bridges to connect non-traditional families and the community to school • Encourages creation of a seamless connection between school and after-school, so all partners consider it one program • Invites input and participation of community through surveys, service on advisory committee, or sharing skills or resources with program management
S11	The program utilizes community partners to enhance activity offerings, support learning, and to share information with students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners with community agencies for provision of character education or other programs for students, or for cooperative planning of special community-wide events or staff development • Recruits community members, retired citizens as mentors, tutors, or volunteers • Involves community members in providing clubs, teaching skills, (i.e. chess, sports, fitness, sewing), sharing careers, or as resources • Encourages retired citizens to volunteer • Provides orientation, planning, support, and appreciation to make the experience of volunteering successful
S12	The school, community and program staff share in the process of recruiting and retaining students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides teachers with information about the program, including the target population, to share with students or families • Sets goals/priorities regarding who will be targeted in recruitment (free or reduced lunch, English Language Learners, etc.) • Communicates purpose of program and priorities for enrollment to school and community • Develops enrollment strategies to reach the students and families (notices at businesses, churches, workplaces, press releases, personal contact with families, referrals by teachers, agencies) • Provides activities that are motivating to students to facilitate regular participation

School/Community Collaboration		Establishes and maintains positive relationships and coordinated linkages with school staff and community partners to support student success.
S13	Staff build intentional linkages connecting students to the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, and service groups to advance student learning and assist schools and families, including mentoring or tutoring • Fosters student participation in community service • Publicizes information about the program, events and performance to school community members, including those without school-age children • Builds relationships with community members by providing students opportunities to visit, interview, “shadow” or assist community agencies or businesses • Notifies students and families of community events and opportunities such as family library nights, sports’ team sign-ups, 4-H, scouting, etc., helping facilitate registration or helping to reduce barriers to participation

Environment, Safety & Wellness of Students		Collaborates with school to provide adequate and secure physical space, as well as a safe, healthy, inclusive, and nurturing environment.
E1	Program space is arranged well for a range of activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides space and facilities to accommodate a variety of learning experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Age appropriate classrooms which can be used daily * Furniture that fits the body size of students being served * Materials ready and available in the room to achieve the mission (example: science work completion requires water, measuring cups, other manipulatives, dictionaries, pencils) * Regular access to learning areas such as: computer lab, cafeteria or gym, music or arts rooms for enrichment activities, outdoor playground (as weather/age appropriate), and accessible restrooms • Provides quiet areas for reading, space for projects, physical games or sports, creative arts, dramatic play, enrichment, eating and socializing • Separates quiet areas from more active areas • Reflects students' contributions • Accommodates students with special needs or limitations • Encourages students to take initiative, responsibility, and to create and explore (i.e. set the rules, choose activities, help plan schedules) • Provides space that is safe and clean and well-maintained • Allows and is appropriately equipped and suitable for a rich variety of activities
E2	The program's indoor space meets the needs of the students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides adequate space for number of students and variety of activities offered • Meets or exceeds local health and safety codes, (i.e. emergency information is posted, etc.) • Follows written guidelines, consistent with school day program, for use of facility and equipment, (use of computers, restrooms, gym, media) • Provides organized, adequate, convenient, student-accessible storage for program materials and personal belongings • Is safe, accessible and hazard-free
E3	The program's outdoor space meets the needs of students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides for safety, wellness and security of students (some protection from sun or weather, secure area, safe equipment and grounds with no hazards present) • Provides a variety of equipment which allows students to be creative and independent, as well as to develop a variety of skills • Follows school program guidelines for playground and equipment safety; staff are positioned for constant visual observation • Protects students from potential harm, (i.e. parking lots, streets, unauthorized visitors, weather) • Provides opportunity for active and quiet play • Provides space and equipment for all sizes and abilities of students • Develops and follows procedures for response to a playground emergency
E4	Staff know where each student is during the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizes required staff to student ratios (1 to 8-10 for kindergarten, 1 to 12-15 for grades 1-12) • Provides a process for locating all students at all times • Offers a balance of security, independence and stimulation to meet the needs of students • Assigns staff to groups of students or activity areas to assure that all students are appropriately involved in the program at all times

Environment, Safety & Wellness of Students		Collaborates with school to provide adequate and secure physical space, as well as a safe, healthy, inclusive, and nurturing environment.
E5	Staff know which students to expect to arrive in the program each day, dismiss appropriately to ensure safety, and inform parents of attendance or dismissal issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops and manages effective arrival and dismissal procedures and plans for safe travel home, including knowing who will pick up students, or how and when they are released • Knows whom to expect, each day • Informs parent when expected students do not arrive • Knows which adults may pick students up and which may not • Knows if a student has written permission to go home without an adult
E6	Students are carefully supervised to maintain safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements techniques for effective supervision (students know expectations, consistency is practiced, focus is entirely on students, emergency coverage plan is in place) • Maintains visual observation and close proximity of students up to age 13 at all times • Maintains developmentally appropriate supervision for age 13 and above • Develops and uses plans for different levels of supervision according to the level of risk involved, (i.e. field trips, use of internet, tools) and according to students' ages, abilities and needs • Transitions students smoothly and safely from one activity, space or program to another, whether individually or in groups • Supervises arrivals and departures very carefully, providing adequate security for program
E7	The program provides an environment that protects the health and enhances the wellness of the students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a space for those who become ill, separate from others • Informs parents that those who are ill must remain at home, etc. • Provides a stimulating, welcoming and supportive environment for students, practicing inclusion for all • Develops, implements and shares approved safety plans and procedures with staff and families • Knows, records, and informs staff of special health or safety needs of participants • Establishes, maintains and communicates code of conduct to participants, staff and the families • Recognizes and responds to students who are not interacting or connected with others
E8	Meals and snacks are nutritious and adequate in portion to meet the needs of the students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses USDA Nutrition guidelines (see Grantee Assistance Guide, USDA website is www.fns.usda.gov) • Allows students to participate in activities and projects which provide instruction and reinforcement of healthy skills (for example, cooking, meal planning, measuring) • Displays practices which promote healthy choices, (i.e. staff supervises quantity, students practice reading the ingredients, comparing calories, journaling about diet to show understanding of balanced meals based on the food pyramid) • Develops student responsibility for personal hygiene and clean-up • Records and provides for special dietary needs of students
E9	Staff ensure that students take steps to minimize health risks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires hand washing before snack, touch only your own food • Separates a child who is not well • Provides tissues as needed • Provides basic first aid skills, as age-appropriate

Environment, Safety & Wellness of Students		Collaborates with school to provide adequate and secure physical space, as well as a safe, healthy, inclusive, and nurturing environment.
E10	Staff provide students skills to recognize and report personal safety issues, such as bullying, child abuse, or drug/alcohol abuse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides resources which present students with information to promote understanding of the implications of participating in potentially unhealthy behaviors, such as smoking, drinking, drugs, and the advantages of healthy behaviors of good nutrition and daily exercise • Applies strength based behavior strategies appropriately and consistently • Provides non-threatening, confidential, and easily understood processes for students to report their concerns in a timely manner • Engages appropriate resources, (i.e. counselor, school social worker) to support student's needs • Creates settings where students are free from victimization

Programming		Provides well-rounded experiential learning opportunities to support each student's physical, social, and cognitive growth, including skill building and mastery activities aligned to school district content standards.
P1	Homework time is characterized by adequate adult support, timely and appropriate responses to student questions, and supply of necessary materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices techniques, strategies, and time periods appropriate to primary, intermediate, middle or high school level • Provides adequate supplies of necessary materials (e.g., paper, pencil, manipulatives) and the level of engagement is appropriate to the task (e.g., quiet for homework, more active participation for math, bingo) • Creates ways students can share homework assignments with their families through activities, experiences or questions, in order to connect families to learning in a real-life setting
P2	Activities and offerings reflect the mission of the program and promote the broad development of the students in the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes activities for skill building and mastery • Provides opportunities for students to be involved in planning, exercising choice, and engaging in a rich variety of intentional learning activities • Incorporates academic programming which supports state and local standards that integrates and complements, but does not duplicate school day activities • Provides engaging programming in arts that integrates resources from the community to provide a broader range of activities • Features interactive activities which interest, challenge and motivate students of all ages and skill levels
P3	Language and literacy activities are both embedded throughout the program and explicitly offered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides daily activities that utilize reading, writing, speaking and/or listening • Invites writing by placing engaging materials at centers • Creates a literacy-rich environment, including display of students work • Plans activities which include interpreting, answering, retelling, identifying parts, using graphic organizers, dictionaries, etc. • Provides opportunities for reading (e.g., daily expectations, steps for each activity, reading to a younger child, playing vocabulary games, using word boards for storytelling, matching games, board games) • Gathers assignments and strategies from school-day teachers for groups and individuals • Provides access to technology to be used in a variety of ways for communicating and learning • Provides students experiences in planning for CCLC programming, writing letters of invitation or thanks, newsletters, plays, etc.
P4	Mathematics is developed in students through the use of engaging learning games and activities, projects meaningful to students, or through technology which appears interesting to students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates with school-day staff to gather assignments, learn age appropriate strategies and plan interactive activities • Designs real-life problems to be solved with mathematics • Uses a variety of board and card games to encourage participation and teach math skills • Embeds math activities into physical activity, reading, snack, facilitating use of charts or graphs or clipboards for recording • Provides fun, interactive practice of skills learned or needed (e.g., math facts, shapes, probability, measurement, estimation, calculators, computers, logical thinking, careers)
P5	Science activities include in-depth, hands-on investigations where systematic inquiry is encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides students opportunities to ask questions, conduct experiments or investigations, use tools to extend senses, use evidence to develop explanations, share findings • Uses subjects/projects suggested by students to teach skills such as observing, describing, predicting, noting changes • Provides cooking or other hands-on experiments, connected to the school-day curriculum

Programming		Provides well-rounded experiential learning opportunities to support each student's physical, social, and cognitive growth, including skill building and mastery activities aligned to school district content standards.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explores science careers, using community volunteers
P6	Fine arts, creative arts, and/or dramatic enrichment activities are available to students at least weekly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses local resources (e.g., community/family members, organizations, high school students) as volunteers to provide clubs, lessons, or practices at different skill levels • Follows interests of students, their families, and the community (e.g., quilting, pottery, dance, drill teams, story-telling) • Plans special events such as talent shows, performances or displays • Develops activities which honor the languages and cultures of the students
P7	Students can choose from a wide variety of activities each day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables students to explore resources and issues via projects in the community or with volunteers on-site • Incorporates programming in arts and academics that integrates and complements (but does not duplicate) school-day activities, supporting local and state standards • Plans activities which invite participation because they are designed with consideration of different learning styles
P8	The daily schedule is flexible, and it offers enough security, independence, and stimulation to meet the needs of the students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Features activities commensurate with the age and skill-level of students • Provides, in consultation with students, activities which reflect their interests • Establishes and follows a schedule that is known to all staff, students, school staff and families
P9	A variety of instructional strategies are used to meet the needs of all students, including the needs of exceptional learners (special education to gifted).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests information from family regarding student needs and interests • Communicates with school-day staff and specialists regarding general strategies or specific needs of students • Observes in school-day classroom when possible, to see strategies used for specific students • Participates in Individual Educational Plan (IEP) meetings at invitation of parent or staff • Requests planning meeting or assistance, when appropriate
P10	Recreational activities include an appropriate range of free choice play and group, structured activities, such as sports. Offerings should be sufficiently stimulating to encourage students to exercise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers non-competitive games and skill-building activities, as well as competitive games • Uses resources to teach correct skills and rules of the game/sport, including community programs, when available • Creates alternative activities or modifications to meet needs of all • Establishes procedures for problem-solving disputes respectfully • Responds to students' interests and requests when selecting activities offered
P11	Leadership development opportunities are offered to students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigns students to lead a game, summarize a story, teach a skill, with appropriate modeling • Develops peer helpers by preparing older students to assist younger students • Provides opportunities for students to develop problem-solving skills, and work cooperatively • Allows and encourages students to share their work with family and the community in a variety of ways • Promotes student-led parent-teacher conferences • Connects with community resources to provide student leadership opportunities • Affords students opportunities to express ideas and concerns, practice teamwork and respect, and develop leadership and responsibility

Programming		Provides well-rounded experiential learning opportunities to support each student’s physical, social, and cognitive growth, including skill building and mastery activities aligned to school district content standards.
P12	Programming includes regular activities to foster positive peer-to-peer relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds a climate of community, acceptance, and respect, bringing out the best in students, and finding ways each may contribute ideas and suggestions • Connects student by encouraging peers to reach out in friendship or to complete projects or other tasks • Encourages cooperation, limits competitiveness • Uses character-building or strengths-based approaches • Teaches students about emotion, empathy building, skills for problem solving and making friends, using literature or focus groups, or public service • Recognizes positive actions (e.g., “I saw you sit with Susan when she was alone at snack”)
P13	Programming includes intentional linkages to connect students to the community in which they live.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborates with community businesses, agencies or members to provide service options for students • Connects students to ongoing community activities, such as scouts, sports, 4-H, theater or fine arts opportunities, initially bringing those resources into the program, as possible • Plans or participates in community-wide efforts to meet a need such as a fitness walk, park “clean-up” project • Provides opportunities to “interview” or shadow an individual or agency or service provider

Continuous Improvement		Utilizes processes of evaluation for the purpose of continuous improvement and accountability.
[While the Observations for Quality After School Programming do not contain a separate section on evaluation, note administration item A-14. The Evaluation Guidebook is the reference for the following indicators of quality. The numbers following C (Continuous Improvement) are provided for easy reference only.]		
C1	Retains and uses the skills of a highly qualified evaluator to participate in the local continuous improvement process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local evaluator is professionally qualified (completed advanced graduate level studies in assessment and evaluation) Local evaluator is ethically qualified (is external to the program and school, does not provide professional development for compensation to program and school) Local evaluator is meaningfully involved in the continuous improvement of the 21st CCLC program (visits all sites at least 2-3 times per year, performs complete observations with rich debriefs immediately following, participates in local management team meetings at least every other month)
C2	Collects comprehensive informal and formal data about program functioning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collects all required state evaluation survey data with a minimum of 90% return rates (collaboration surveys, teacher surveys, parent surveys, student surveys) Collects all other required state evaluation data with 100% accuracy (site observations, attendance data) Collects informal and anecdotal information continuously (conversations with parents at pick-up time, suggestion box, student meetings, works with local evaluator to develop and submit success stories) Provides professional development to all staff to equip all members to better understand the importance of data and how it is used for program improvement
C3	Manages comprehensive formal data about program functioning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains and utilizes the 21st CCLC Microsoft Access database to house student data, survey data, and observation data. Ensures all formal data and attendance data are appropriately entered in the 21st CCLC Microsoft Access database. Verifies that all data are 100% accurate by providing quiet workspace for data entry, uses a double check system for all data, and performs data cleaning processes through review processes for multiple individuals (data entry person, project director, and local evaluator)
C4	Reflects on evaluation results with members of the local 21 st CCLC management team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilizes Continuous Improvement Process Data Snapshot provided by State Evaluator to review program outcomes on at least an annual basis Uses stakeholders' input to identify strengths and areas for continuous improvement through, at a minimum, an annual debrief meeting facilitated by the local evaluator Develops action plans with strategies to strengthen lower performing observation domains and other lower performing areas of process or outcome data (low return rate on parent surveys, few students improving in reading skills) Monitors implementation of action plans and works with management team to continuously maintain the cycle of improvement
C5	Reports on evaluation findings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submits all required evaluation results through mandated federal and state reporting systems Shares evaluation results with all stakeholders (management team, staff, school partners, parents, students, community members)