



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

PROGRAM **BASICS**

BLUEprint

**THE DEFINITIVE PROGRAM
RESOURCE FOR BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**

2019

PROGRAM BASICS

The Definitive Program Resource for Boys & Girls Clubs



The information contained herein is intended to be used as a guide for implementing standard program practices by each member organization, and should not be construed to expand or reduce any rights or obligations set forth in the constitution. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in this document, the standards and requirements in the constitution shall prevail.

The Program Basics BLUEprint guides Boys & Girls Club professionals in implementing sound youth development practices and planning and delivering effective programming. These practices should be adapted by each local organization, reviewed by their **legal counsel**, approved by its board of directors, and applied with consistency. Although details may vary by state laws or **local community standards**, the consistent application of general process enables organizations to make good decisions about protecting those we serve.

Foreword



As time marches forward and technologies advance, so do the needs of youth. As the largest youth development organization in the world, our obligation to provide our professionals with the tools they need to offer engaging programming also evolves. Our last Program Basics handbook was published in 1999. We have rebuilt it to ensure youth across America and military installations around the world receive an Outcome-Driven Club Experience.

Our 24-member Steering Committee of Club professionals partnered with the Program Basics Advisory Network of over 300 professionals from Clubs around the country to develop this Program Basics BLUEprint. We designed it to guide youth development professionals of all experience levels in delivering world-class programming. It starts with the fundamentals of Boys & Girls Clubs and leads Club staff through the ins and outs of programming.

The opportunity to be a voice for Club professionals was an honor. We hope we served with integrity and respect for our mission:

To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.

With this, we humbly submit the Program Basics BLUEprint.

In Service,

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Table of Contents

Introduction **1**

Section 1: The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs **5**

Section Summary 6

Our Mission 8

Our Core Beliefs 8

Our Formula for Impact 9

Our Perspective: Positive Youth Development . .15

Program Quality Standards and Continuous Quality Improvement17

Next Steps for Learning19

Reference Handout: Our Formula for Impact. . .21

Reference Handout: Practicing Social-Emotional Skills to Develop Character.22

Reference Handout: Inclusion Guidelines23

Section 2: Putting Youth Development Into Practice **25**

Section Summary26

Practicing the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development28

Next Steps for Learning40

Reference Handout: Integrating Homeroom Into Your Schedule.43

Reference Handout: Scheduling Opportunities and Expectations44

Reference Handout: Building Recognition Into Each Club Day46

Section 3: Understanding Children and Teens **48**

Section Summary49

Developmental Milestones of Children and Teens 50

Developmentally Appropriate Programming . . .50

Progressive Programming52

Next Steps for Learning53

Reference Handout: Developmental Milestones of Children and Teens55

Section 4: Principles of Program Planning and Delivery **58**

Section Summary59

Building Blocks of Programming62

Key Factors for Enhancing Program Quality . . .73

Planning Your Own Programs and Activities . . .81

Next Steps for Learning83

Reference Handout: Integrating Character Development Throughout the Club Day85

Session Planning Template.86

Reference Handout: Elements of a High-Quality Session.88

Section 5: Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment **89**

Section Summary90

Continuous Quality Improvement92

Overall Program Planning and Assessment . . .93

Next Steps for Learning105

Club-Wide Goals and Strategies Plan Template106

Sample Club-Wide Goals and Strategies Plan. .107

Targeted Program Plan Template108

Sample Targeted Program Plan109

Glossary of Terms **110**

Endnotes **119**

Introduction

Welcome to the Program Basics BLUEprint. It's the definitive guide to program planning and delivery in Boys & Girls Clubs and BGCA-affiliated Youth Centers on U.S. military installations! If you are a youth development professional, site-level program director or site director, this guide is for you.

As you can see, the BLUEprint has the look and feel of a set of construction plans. That's because it's your practical guide to facilitating positive youth development through high-quality programs and activities.

The Program Basics Suite

The BLUEprint forms the cornerstone of the Program Basics Suite. The suite is a collection of resources to support your organization's ability to enhance program quality and improve the Club Experience for youth. The suite includes:

- **The BLUEprint** – This resource reviews key Boys & Girls Club Movement history, culture and youth development fundamentals. It guides youth development professionals and their supervisors in planning and delivering effective programming.
- **The Playbooks** – These tools are designed to help any Club professional create an Outcome-Driven Club Experience for youth in any physical space, time of day, or Core Program Area of a Boys & Girls Club or Youth Center.
- **The Planner** – This online collection of tools will make it easier and quicker to construct effective Club program plans and schedules.
- **The YDToolbox mobile app** – This gives easy, immediate access to tips and activities that give youth a high-quality experience. It provides supervisors with tools for training staff members as effective youth development practitioners. We're renovating the app's features, content and look to make it even more useful for programming.
- **Spillett Leadership University Learning Opportunities** – From online micro-learning videos to instructor-led sessions, all Club professionals can explore the Program Basics Suite and assemble its components to build high-quality programming.

What Is the BLUEprint?

This guide's name – and its unique capitalization – are no accident. Hundreds of Boys & Girls Club professionals partnered with Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) to develop this resource, and they christened it.

The word **blueprint**, according to Merriam-Webster, means:

1. A photographic print in white on a bright blue ground, or blue on a white ground, used especially for copying maps, mechanical drawings and architects' plans
2. Something resembling a blueprint (as in serving as a model or providing guidance); especially a detailed plan or program of action

The all-caps “BLUE” in the name pays tribute to more than a century of Boys & Girls Club wisdom and tradition, embodied in our signature color and “knuckles” logo. It affirms our “Boys & Girls Club blue” culture and identity.

So, think of the BLUEprint as your set of plans to constructing the best-possible Outcome-Driven Club Experience for youth, as defined in our Formula for Impact.

The BLUEprint has five sections that build on each other somewhat sequentially. They can also be used as stand-alone resources. How you use them depends on your learning and professional development needs, and those of your staff if you are a supervisor.

1. **The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs** – Primarily for **youth development professionals**, this section provides our Movement’s mission, Core Beliefs, and Boys & Girls Clubs’ perspective on positive youth development for the 21st century, while explaining our Formula for Impact theory of change. It features a history of our youth development approach, and draws a link between that history and where our Movement is today: working collectively to enhance program quality and drive positive outcomes through a focus on sound youth development practice.
2. **Putting Youth Development Into Practice** – For **youth development professionals**, **site-level program directors** and **site directors**, this section uses our Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development as the scaffold for a rich set of practice tips to strengthen program planning and delivery. It explains the importance of developing character by infusing social-emotional skills into every aspect of programming.
3. **Understanding Children and Teens** – All **youth development professionals** need to know the typical developmental characteristics of youth at different ages. This section provides up-to-date, research-based information about the developmental milestones of children and teens. It helps ensure your programming is not only developmentally appropriate, but also progressive. That way, it evolves with youth as they grow and continue building their skills.
4. **Principles of Program Planning and Delivery** – For new **youth development professionals**, this section describes the basic building blocks of programming. It walks **site-level program directors** and **site directors** through enhancing program quality at their site. Then it shows how to bind everything together in careful daily session and program planning.
5. **Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment** – Primarily for **site directors** and **site-level program directors**, this section introduces the basic phases of a continuous quality improvement process. It outlines tasks for annual program planning and assessment. This includes establishing Club-wide goals and strategies, and building those into seasonal and weekly program schedules. It also provides tips and resources for evaluating overall program effectiveness.



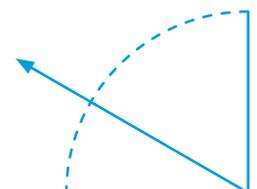
Youth Development Professionals



Site-Level Program Directors



Site Directors



How Do I Use the BLUEprint?

We've built in many features to make the BLUEprint practical and easy to use.

- Each section starts with a **Section Summary**. This is a brief sketch of the key points to review and reinforce learning.
- Each section ends with **Next Steps for Learning**. This poses questions for reflection and discussion with a supervisor. It suggests Spillet Leadership University or other resources for taking learning to the next level.
- Within each section, **practice tips** appear in bulleted lists, so they're easy to find. Relevant **resources** stand out in the margins. **Sidebars**, which appear in blue boxes, detail important concepts or practices.
- Each section also provides **reference handouts**, **templates** or **samples** to use in program planning.
- The BLUEprint ends with a comprehensive **Glossary of Terms**.

Using the BLUEprint to Support Professional Development

If you're a new youth development professional:

The BLUEprint can be your steady companion and guide as you complete your orientation and initial onboarding. We recommend reading the first four sections in order over your first 90 days. After you complete each section, write your responses to the reflection questions. Then discuss them with your supervisor in a one-on-one meeting. Ask your supervisor for coaching to meet your particular needs and for relevant in-service training opportunities.

If you're a seasoned youth development professional or a site-level program director:

Review the sections Putting Youth Development Into Practice and Principles of Program Planning and Delivery. This will ensure you're doing all you can to practice high-quality youth development and implement the best possible programming. Consider what you can do to step up your continuous quality improvement efforts, either as an individual contributor or as someone who guides a team in planning and delivering programming. Then read the Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment section. Talk with your supervisor about opportunities to contribute more significantly to overall program planning and evaluation.

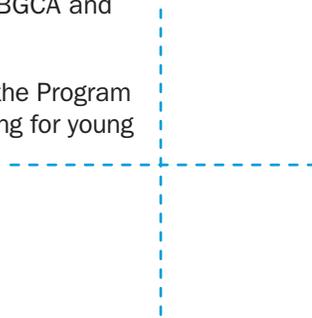
If you supervise youth development professionals:

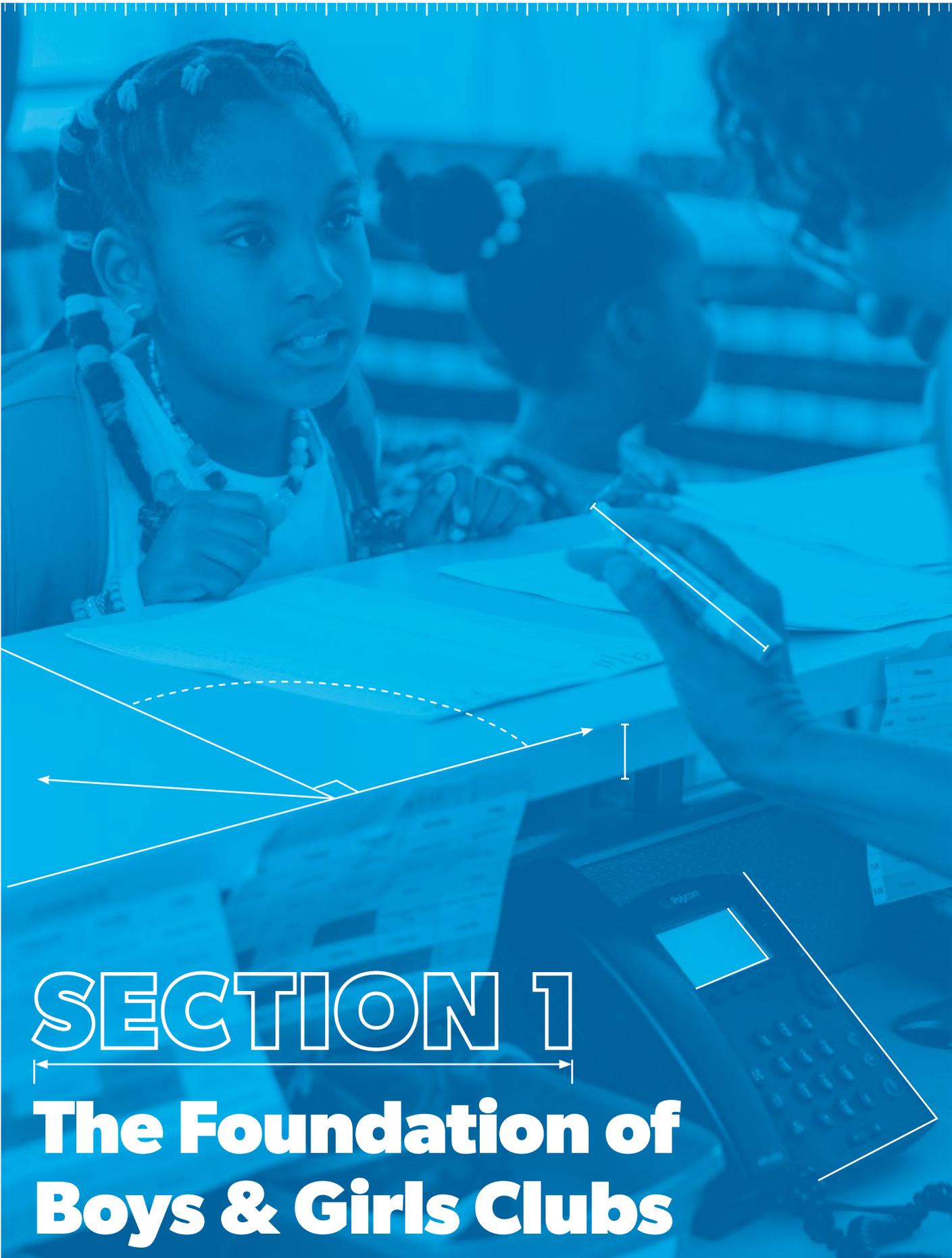
Become familiar with the entire BLUEprint for two reasons. First, to confirm you understand and embrace all the principles and recommended practices. Second, to ensure you can effectively lead, guide, and coach your staff in providing high-quality youth development and programming. It will also guide your continuous quality improvement process. Take a personal, hands-on approach to developing your individual staff members. This includes providing them with dedicated planning time, regular one-on-one supervisory meetings, individualized performance goal-setting, ongoing training and coaching, and opportunities to develop their leadership. Use the BLUEprint's content and tools as a resource in providing this kind of supervision. Ask your supervisor for the same kind of support and coaching to strengthen your own knowledge and skills.

If you provide onboarding and in-service training opportunities to staff at your site or organization:

The BLUEprint is designed to be a helpful learning resource for you. You can design the onboarding process for new staff members' first 90 days around the content of the first four sections of the BLUEprint. Use the Section Summaries and Reference Handouts to review and reinforce critical content with new staff. Work with supervisors to integrate each section's reflection questions into their regular one-on-one meetings. Ask them to coach staff on how to use the BLUEprint's planning templates. For in-service training opportunities, encourage supervisors to incorporate key BLUEprint content into their regular staff meetings. Review the BLUEprint to identify other BGCA and Spillet Leadership University resources for staff.

Thank you for reading this Introduction. It's time for you to delve into the Program Basics BLUEprint. Enjoy using it to build the best possible programming for young people at your site.





SECTION 1

The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs

Section Summary:

The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs

Our Mission

To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.

Our Core Beliefs

Boys & Girls Clubs and Youth Centers provide kids and teens:

- Safe, positive and inclusive environments in which to learn and grow
- Opportunities to develop positive, meaningful, and healthy connections with peers and youth development professionals
- High-quality programs and activities that build upon young people's strengths, allow them to explore new experiences, and help them develop skills for good decision-making
- Experiences that foster hope, a sense of belonging, and a purpose
- Opportunities for youth to lead, share ideas, and be heard and recognized

Our Formula for Impact

This describes how Clubs and Youth Centers, individually and collectively, can increase our impact on young people. Our formula says that if we take the **Young People Who Need Us Most** and provide them with the best possible **Outcome-Driven Club Experience**, they will achieve positive outcomes in the priority areas of **Academic Success, Good Character and Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles**.

The **Outcome-Driven Club Experience** has four components.

- 1. Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development:** These are fundamental to your overall program. They're based on the results of a research project that studied many Clubs' best youth development practices. The study articulated five key elements that Clubs and Youth Centers should implement to make a beneficial difference in young people's lives:
 - Create a safe, positive environment
 - Generate fun and foster a sense of belonging
 - Encourage supportive relationships with peers and adults
 - Provide opportunities and set expectations
 - Offer recognition
- 2. High-Yield Activities** are hands-on, interactive, fun experiences that intentionally develop and reinforce core skills explicitly taught through Targeted Programs and help support our three priority outcome areas.
- 3. Targeted Programs** are sequenced learning experiences with specific objectives for building skills and knowledge, organized into five Core Program Areas. They are targeted to help youth achieve positive outcomes in one or more of the Formula for Impact's three priority outcome areas.

PURPOSE/AUDIENCE

Primarily for **youth development professionals**, this section provides our Movement's mission, Core Beliefs, and Boys & Girls Clubs' perspective on positive youth development for the 21st century, while explaining our Formula for Impact theory of change. It features a history of our youth development approach, and draws a link between that history and where our Movement is today: working collectively to enhance program quality and drive positive outcomes through a focus on sound youth development practice.

SECTION 1

The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs

NOTES:

- 4. Regular Attendance** is important for deepening our positive impact on young people. We need to make sure they become members, attend often, and stay members as they grow up. When Clubs and Youth Centers use a youth-centered approach – where youth have voice, choice and autonomy – it helps to support frequent attendance and retention of members, especially through the critical teen years.

Our Perspective: Positive Youth Development

Youth development refers to helping young people have the building blocks needed for positive cognitive, social, emotional and physical development so they can thrive and be resilient.

For Clubs and Youth Centers to foster the development of the whole child, youth development professionals should focus on creating positive experiences, relationships and environments for youth through implementation of the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development. Positive experiences, relationships and environments are the foundation for building good character, and, ultimately, positive outcomes in our three priority areas for youth.

Program Quality Standards and Continuous Quality Improvement

BGCA has set five program quality standards to help Clubs assess their strengths and areas of improvement:

- 1.** Club professionals display high-quality youth development practices.
- 2.** Club professionals deliver a variety of developmentally appropriate Targeted Programs and activities that offer youth expanded opportunities.
- 3.** The Club is a youth-centered environment that showcases youth engagement and youth voice.
- 4.** Youth development professionals and Club leadership participate in regular professional development opportunities around high-quality youth development practices and environments.
- 5.** Each site and the organization as a whole has a quality improvement plan focused on the Club Experience and high-quality staff practice. ■

SECTION

1

The Foundation of
Boys & Girls Clubs

The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs

Congratulations! You're part of a nationwide federation of Boys & Girls Clubs, and BGCA-affiliated Youth Centers on U.S. military installations, with an enduring history of delivering life-changing services to young people. It's important for you to know about Boys & Girls Clubs' mission and Core Beliefs, who we serve and how we serve them, and how Clubs are unique among providers of out-of-school-time programs.

This section of the Program Basics BLUEprint will help you better understand your critical youth development role and serve as an effective advocate for your organization and the youth you serve.

Our Mission

Let's start at the beginning, with the mission statement for the collective federation of all Boys & Girls Clubs (often referred to as the Boys & Girls Club Movement):

To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.

Boys & Girls Clubs serve the young people who need them the most, however that is defined in their local communities.

Your Boys & Girls Club organization may have a slightly different mission statement than the one for the entire Club Movement. Check with your supervisor to be sure of the wording of your Club's mission statement, and jot it down here:

Our Core Beliefs

Boys & Girls Clubs historically have had Core Beliefs that help distinguish them from other youth-serving organizations. These statements reflect the values and essential features of all Clubs.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) has collaborated closely with many Club and Youth Center professionals across our federation to update the Core Beliefs presented in this publication. The updated Core Beliefs are grounded in the best current youth development research and practice. They speak to the challenges and opportunities our young people face in the 21st century. They are also linked to the character traits we want staff and youth to demonstrate: caring, citizenship, fairness, respect, responsibility and trustworthiness.¹

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This chart will help you to understand what each of the Core Beliefs mean.

Core Belief	What it means
Safe, positive, and inclusive environments in which to learn and grow	This belief reflects and emphasizes one of our Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development: safe, positive environment. The statement ensures all young people know they are welcomed and accepted at Boys & Girls Clubs. When youth development professionals model behaviors that help youth feel physically and emotionally safe, and create positive experiences that engage everyone, youth demonstrate respect and fairness.
Opportunities to develop positive, meaningful, and healthy connections with peers and youth development professionals	This belief emphasizes the crucial connections young people form at Boys & Girls Clubs. When members feel connected to peers and adult staff, it helps them develop socially, learn to be responsible, show respect for self and others, be fair-minded, and express care and concern for others.
High-quality programs and activities that build upon young people’s strengths, allow them to explore new experiences, and help them develop skills for good decision-making	This belief emphasizes the importance of building upon young people’s strengths when introducing them to new experiences. Through these experiences, and with the guidance of caring adults, youth learn to get along with others and build many skills, along with developing the character virtues of responsibility and citizenship.
Experiences that foster hope, a sense of belonging, and a sense of purpose	This belief speaks to how high-quality Club Experiences can unlock young people’s potential, not only by sparking hope, but also by instilling in them a sense that they are part of a community, with a sense of purpose for their lives.
Opportunities for youth to lead, share ideas, and be heard and recognized	This belief emphasizes the importance of youth voice. It calls all Boys & Girls Clubs to empower young people to actively shape and own their Club Experience.

Our Formula for Impact

Today, many of the young people who need us most take advantage of the programs, activities, and services Clubs and Youth Centers provide. These youth benefit from trained, caring professional staff and volunteers who help them take control of their lives, envision productive futures and reach their goals. Only with your commitment to your day-to-day work with young people can we be successful in helping them achieve the key outcomes they need to realize their full potential.

To make sure this happens, Boys & Girls Clubs adopted the Formula for Impact, a theory of change that describes how they can increase their impact. A theory of change defines all the building blocks required to bring about a long-term goal or goals. It creates a commonly understood vision of how the goals will be achieved, and how to measure progress.

SECTION

1

The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs

Our theory of change says if we take the **Young People Who Need Us Most** and provide them the best possible **Outcome-Driven Club Experience**, they will achieve positive outcomes that will enable them to be **Academically Successful**, demonstrate **Good Character and Citizenship**, and live **Healthy Lifestyles**.

The Reference Handout, Our Formula for Impact, located at the end of this section, provides an illustration of our theory of change.

The Outcome-Driven Club Experience

As you look at the Formula for Impact illustration, you'll notice the true work of Clubs and Youth Centers – the heart of what you do – lies fittingly in the center. You can successfully provide young people with an Outcome-Driven Club Experience by implementing its four components:

- Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development
- Targeted Programs
- High-Yield Activities
- Regular Attendance

We know it is the overall Club Experience – the power of enriching programs in youth-centered environments where adults and youth work in partnership; fun, new experiences; and supportive relationships – that connects children and teens to their Club or Youth Center, and assures they will participate often and stay engaged through high school.

Thus, the Formula for Impact challenges you to work in a more holistic, intentional manner. It requires you and your teammates to work toward common goals: to start with your Club's end in mind. You play an important role in making sure every aspect of the programming at your Club or Youth Center helps children and teens achieve positive outcomes.

Three Priority Outcome Areas

Our theory of change states that if we implement the four components of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience well, we will enable young people to achieve positive outcomes in the three priority outcome areas of Academic Success, Good Character and Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles.

Why these particular outcome areas? Take a moment to consider the risks and obstacles today's young people face. By prioritizing these three outcome areas, we're better positioned to fulfill our mission of enabling all young people to reach their full potential.

Here are descriptions of our desired outcomes for young people:

- **Academic Success:** Graduate on time, motivated to learn, with a plan to succeed in today's modern workforce
- **Good Character and Citizenship:** Develop strong character and take actions that make a difference in the community
- **Healthy Lifestyles:** Make healthy lifestyle decisions resulting in social, emotional and physical well-being

Now that we have our end goals in mind, let's explore each of the four components of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience in more depth.

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SECTION 1

The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs

NOTES:

RESOURCES

The **YDToolbox mobile app** helps Club staff and managers build their youth development skills with over 100 tools tied to the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development. Download the app for free on the Google Play or Apple stores by searching for “YDToolbox,” or access it on your computer at ydtoolbox.goodbarber.com.

The Club Experience Blog offers activity ideas, learning opportunities and practical wisdom from Club professionals that you can implement to cultivate a high-quality Club Experience. Access the blog on the **YDToolbox mobile app** or online: clubexperience.blog.

SECTION**1****The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs****Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development****What are they?**

The **Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development** are fundamental to your overall program. When these elements are in place, they enable youth to participate meaningfully in their Club Experience and help boost their positive outcomes. They’re based on the results of a research project that studied many Clubs’ best youth development practices.² The study articulated Five Key Elements that Clubs and Youth Centers should implement to make a beneficial difference in young people’s lives:

1. Create a safe, positive environment
2. Generate fun and foster a sense of belonging
3. Encourage supportive relationships with peers and adults
4. Provide opportunities and set expectations
5. Offer recognition

Why are they important?

The Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development lay the foundation for implementing effective Targeted Programs and High-Yield Activities. When used, these elements help young people to build core physical, cognitive, social and emotional skills. Remember: Your core work is youth development. The programs and activities you implement are simply the vehicles through which you accomplish your core youth development work. Therefore, it’s up to you to ensure all young people experience all five elements whenever they spend time in your Club or Youth Center. When you implement the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development intentionally and consistently, young people will get the most benefit out of your Targeted Programs and High-Yield Activities, and attend your Club or Youth Center more often.

To learn more about how to put the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development into practice in your program planning and delivery, read the next section of the BLUEprint, [Putting Youth Development Into Practice](#).

Honoring Our Youth Development Traditions

In the late 1800s, the first Boys’ Clubs pioneered a unique approach to guiding youth that still endures in some form today. The first Club professional, John C. Collins, developed a “method of taking boys off the street and improving their behavior.”³ It included:

- Engaging boys in a building-centered program, with the freedom to choose how they would participate
- Providing a variety of fun, supervised play and games
- Retaining boys through friendly and mutually respectful relationships with adult staff
- Establishing a feeling of trust so boys were more receptive to staff’s guidance in personal, social, cultural and educational areas⁴

Over many decades, Club professionals continued to adapt the original method according to the communities and the youth they served. But the focus remained the same: providing opportunities for youth to meet their developmental needs and build character through **informal but intentional guidance** and **supportive relationships with caring adults**.

During the 1980s, as Clubs continued evolving to meet changes in society, Boys Clubs of America adopted the Youth Development Strategy. The strategy defined how Club professionals and volunteers should interact with young people. It called for all programs and activities to help youth acquire four basic “senses.” These “four senses” would help them build self-esteem and grow into responsible, caring citizens. The strategy was based on a 1972 University of Colorado study, which found that youth who developed into well-adjusted adults had four components in common.⁵

The “four senses,” abbreviated with the easy-to-remember CUBI or BUIC, were defined as follows:

- **A Sense of Competence** – Young people feel proud and confident when they acquire new skills and know they can do something well.
- **A Sense of Usefulness** – Young people know the satisfaction from doing something of value for others.
- **A Sense of Belonging** – Young people know they are welcome and feel they fit in and are accepted.
- **A Sense of Power and Influence** – Young people know their opinions are heard and valued and that they can influence decisions.

Fast forward another two decades. In 2004-05, BGCA partnered with the Search Institute to identify core Club and Youth Center practices instrumental to fostering high-quality youth development.⁶ The research yielded 62 strategies and hundreds of practices! These were codified as the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development and became central to our Formula for Impact theory of change.

As you can see, all of these approaches put youth development at the very heart of our work. They all emphasize that we focus first on forging supportive relationships with youth to help them become the best they can be. We then build on that foundation to help them achieve positive outcomes needed for success in life, all by participating in Club or Youth Center programming.

NOTES:

High-Yield Activities

Let’s look at the second component of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience: High-Yield Activities. Plenty of research tells us that youth need multiple opportunities to learn and grow at home, in school and in the community. Combine that with our own youth development experience, and we know if we are to truly engage youth, those multiple opportunities to learn and grow must also be fun.

SECTION 1

The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs

NOTES:

What are they?

High-Yield Activities provide youth with enjoyable experiences that are hands-on, interactive, intentionally develop and reinforce the core skills explicitly taught through Targeted Programs, and help support our three priority outcome areas. They appeal to members' interests and their desire to play, and can even include some friendly competition. They can be done with individuals, small groups and large groups. They motivate members to explore, develop, create and learn. When done well, they remove the division between learning and playing.

Why are they important?

By integrating High-Yield Activities into the Club Experience, Clubs and Youth Centers help youth extend their learning beyond the regular school day and develop into enthusiastic, self-directed, lifelong learners. High-Yield Activities help enhance the Club Experience by injecting fun, an element of surprise and excitement into the day-to-day routine.

Refer to the Principles of Program Planning and Delivery section of this BLUEprint to learn more about what High-Yield Activities look like when done well and how to do them.

Targeted Programs

Now let's consider the third component of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience: Targeted Programs.

What are they?

Targeted Programs are sequenced learning experiences with specific objectives for building skills and knowledge through five Core Program Areas. They are chosen to help youth achieve positive outcomes in one or more of the Formula for Impact's three priority outcome areas. In order to be effective, Targeted Programs:

- Are planned
- Are designed to achieve stated goals and objectives in a Core Program Area
- Are designed to build upon existing knowledge and skills
- Are conducted for a specific audience
- Are sequenced, meaning they are conducted over a specific period of time, using multiple lessons in a certain order
- Use specific delivery methods
- Measure and evaluate the extent participants achieve goals and objectives

Why are they important?

Targeted Programs help youth acquire useful knowledge and build new skills. They also help youth avoid, cope with, or overcome risks and challenges that are prevalent in our society. These challenges include dropping out of school, engaging in violence or delinquency, high rates of obesity, and alcohol or other drug use. All of these hurdles can compromise members' well-being.

To learn more about Targeted Programs, refer to the Principles of Program Planning and Delivery and Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment sections of this BLUEprint. Read about what they look like when done well and how to implement them, and get tips on building partnerships.

SECTION

1

The Foundation of
Boys & Girls Clubs

NOTES:

Regular Attendance

If we want to have a life-long positive impact on the youth we serve, we need to make sure they become members, attend often, and stay members as they grow up. When Boys & Girls Clubs use a youth-centered approach – where youth have voice, choice and autonomy – it helps to support frequent attendance and retention of members, especially through the critical teen years.

What is it?

Regular Attendance is defined by three indicators:

- **Annual visits (frequency of attendance)** – the number of visits per registered member on an annual basis
- **Average daily attendance (ADA)** – the average number of registered members per day participating in on-site or off-site Club programs and activities
- **Retention/renewal** – the number of current registered members in a given year who renew their membership within a 12-month period after the expiration of their previous membership

It's likely that your Club has set and is tracking specific goals around these indicators. Ask your supervisor for this information.

Why is it important?

A 2009 study showed that young people who attend Clubs more often and over a longer time are more likely to achieve positive outcomes than those who attend less often. The study found that youth were more likely to demonstrate greater positive outcomes when they attended at least 52 times per year. The positive effects were even greater when they attended 104 times per year.⁷

Another after-school program evaluation showed that achieving positive outcomes takes time, and these results often do not become evident until after 12 months or longer.⁸

How do I implement this in my Club or Youth Center?

To engage young people in Club or Youth Center life and keep them coming back, build personal connections with and for them. A great Club Experience helps youth build strong, supportive, trusting relationships with each other, and with caring adult role models and mentors. But this takes time. Thus, making a concerted effort to increase young people's attendance is one of the best strategies your Club or Youth Center can use to increase its impact.

Encourage youth to:

- Attend more often
- Register as full-fledged members, versus just dropping in on occasion or taking part in a short-term recreational league
- Participate more actively in programs, especially targeted ones
- Renew their membership from year to year

Of course, all Clubs have to balance how many youth attend regularly with how many staff there are to serve them. Staff-to-youth ratio is the number of supervising adult staff members compared with the number of youth in a Club

SECTION 1

The Foundation of
Boys & Girls Clubs

NOTES:

or Youth Center program. Many organizations or sites adhere to specific overall ratios because they operate as state-licensed day care providers; have grant-funding requirements (e.g., 21st Century Community Learning Centers); or are a certain type of site (e.g., BGCA-affiliated Youth Centers on U.S. military installations). If you work in such a site, you need to know your organization's or site's policies on this so you can adhere to them.

BGCA also recommends specific ratios depending on the developmental characteristics of certain age groups and the type of activity being offered. Read more about this in the section of this BLUEprint called [Principles of Program Planning and Delivery](#).

Our Perspective: Positive Youth Development

Have you ever heard that Boys & Girls Clubs have a secret sauce? Well, the secret is out! There is actually a set of core ingredients that work together to provide high-quality experiences for youth. And, it's based on science!

Youth development refers to helping young people develop the building blocks needed for positive cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development so they can thrive and be resilient in their lives. [Positive youth development](#) is an intentional, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes and enhances young people's strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.⁹

This may all sound very complicated. So, let's break down some key terms in order to really understand positive youth development.

[Intentional](#) means to do something on purpose or to be deliberate to create meaningful experiences for youth.

[Prosocial](#) means behavior that is positive, helpful, and intended to promote social interactions and build good character to support the development of positive relationships.

For Boys & Girls Clubs and Youth Centers to foster the development of the whole child, it is important that youth development professionals focus on three tasks:

1. Plan and deliver skill-based High-Yield Activities and Targeted Programs (positive experiences).
2. Create social learning experiences to support peer relationships and belonging (positive relationships).
3. Implement high-quality youth development staff practices that support an Outcome-Driven Club Experience (positive environments).

SECTION

1

The Foundation of
Boys & Girls Clubs

NOTES:

Boys & Girls Clubs' Approach to Positive Youth Development

When Clubs and Youth Centers use the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development, they increase their ability to create positive experiences, relationships and environments for youth. For this to occur, it is your responsibility, as well as that of the youth you serve, to demonstrate good character. For Boys & Girls Clubs, positive experiences, positive relationships and positive environments are the foundation for building good character and positive outcomes in our three priority areas for youth.

Consider this:

Staff Model Good Character + Youth Practice Skills Regularly = Character Development

For example, when staff model respect – and when they create opportunities for youth to practice related social-emotional skills like empathy, communication and perspective-taking – we strengthen our foundation to create positive experiences, relationships and environments. Social-emotional skills are related to:

- How youth feel about themselves
- Their relationships with others
- Their ability to regulate emotions
- Their ability to solve problems

As you can see, strong character is a condition for positive youth development to occur.

Review the Reference Handout: Practicing Social-Emotional Skills to Develop Character at the end of this section for more guidance on the skill practice needed to support character development.

Inclusion Is Critical to Positive Youth Development, and Vice Versa

To fulfill our mission, Clubs and Youth Centers must create safe, positive and inclusive environments for youth of every race, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic status, religion or cultural belief. By creating inclusive environments at our Club, we improve the overall experience for all young people.

When youth development professionals use the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development, they help ensure all youth:

- Feel represented
- Have a sense of belonging
- Can meaningfully participate in programming

Review the Reference Handout: Inclusion Guidelines at the end of this section for more guidance to support inclusion.

SECTION 1

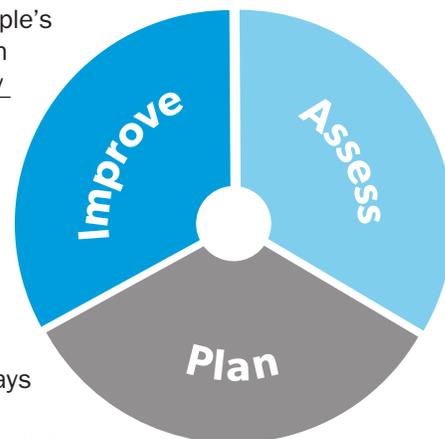
The Foundation of
Boys & Girls Clubs

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Program Quality Standards and Continuous Quality Improvement

Improving program quality and young people's Club Experience requires Clubs and Youth Centers to take part in continuous quality improvement (CQI). CQI is a way of thinking and learning, and a cyclical, ongoing process with three phases:

- Assess
- Plan
- Improve



CQI is about fostering a culture of learning, with the belief that we can always do better. It's about:

- Collecting data and using it to make decisions
- Experimenting with new strategies to improve your Club or Youth Center's operations, programming and youth development practices
- Encouraging your teammates to build new skills and change behaviors
- Creating a safe environment in which staff feel they can practice new techniques and stretch their wings; and where failure is seen as necessary for learning, a result of taking positive risks and experimenting in order to get better
- Establishing feedback loops to check on progress toward improvement goals and regularly asking for input from youth, staff, volunteers and partners

Every Club or Youth Center, no matter its size or resources, and every Club or Youth Center professional can and should make continuous quality improvement activities part of their practice.

Site managers and staff should choose their improvement strategies and tactics based on their organization's priorities and capabilities, and the results of their own assessments. Feel free to start small and work toward achieving some quick wins, if that is best for your site or organization. The point is to start your journey of improvement and then to keep going!

Collectively, though, what are we driving toward? How does "good" look?

BGCA has set five program quality standards. Each standard comes with a description of how it looks when done well.¹⁰ They are:

1. Club professionals display high-quality youth development practices.

Encourage youth and support them in building skills. Create opportunities for youth to develop a sense of belonging by recognizing their contributions and accomplishments, and helping them build relationships with their peers. Remember to adopt youth-centered approaches to reframe conflict. Then acknowledge young people's feelings and help them see the connection between their emotions, behaviors and consequences. Finally, help them identify their own solutions.

SECTION

1

The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs

2. Club professionals deliver a variety of developmentally appropriate Targeted Programs and activities that offer youth expanded opportunities.

Offer a variety of fun experiences throughout the day that tap into youth interests. Help them build multiple skills in the priority outcome areas of Academic Success, Good Character and Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles. Offer youth a choice of age-appropriate, individual or one-on-one mentoring. Include small-group or large-group activities in different Core Program Areas facilitated by adult staff, youth or both. Be sure to plan, present and pace the flow of each session in a manner appropriate for the age range of participants, the group size and the scheduled time frame.

3. The Club is a youth-centered environment that showcases youth engagement and youth voice.

Provide a welcoming atmosphere and ensure your activities support young people's active engagement. Be sure to offer youth opportunities to influence the format or content of program offerings based on their interests, preferences and satisfaction. Consult youth about the design and use of the physical environment. Invite youth to help facilitate or lead sessions and activities for their peers or younger youth.

4. Youth development professionals and Club leadership participate in regular professional development opportunities around high-quality youth development practices and environments.

New staff (paid, volunteer and substitute) participate in at least eight hours of orientation to the job before working with children and youth, with a particular focus on safety and youth development principles and practices. Existing full-time and part-time staff participate in at least eight hours of training annually, with a particular focus on safety and youth development principles and practices. Managers co-develop professional development plans with staff members that reflect their individual interests, needs and aspirations. Managers support staff through regular one-on-one supervision meetings, observing their program facilitation with youth, and coaching them to build their skills.

5. Each site and the organization as a whole has a quality improvement plan focused on the Club Experience and high-quality staff practice.

The site and organization employ strategies for program improvement based on regularly assessing youth outcomes and experiences, staff practice and program quality. Each site has a written plan for program quality improvement with a time frame of one year or less. Managers provide ongoing coaching and training to support staff in meeting site improvement goals.

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RESOURCE

BGCA has developed a series of staff management bulletins for Club and Youth Center directors on promising practices for hiring, onboarding, facilitating teamwork and communication, supervision, coaching and professional development. The bulletins contain tools such as interview questions, a sample onboarding checklist, a staff meeting agenda template, conversation prompts for one-on-one supervision meetings, tips for conducting effective staff observations, etc.

[BGCA.net/ProgramQuality](https://www.bgca.net/ProgramQuality)

SECTION
1

The Foundation of
Boys & Girls Clubs



Next Steps for Learning: The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs

Take your learning to the next level using these reflection questions and resources.

Reflection Questions

After you think about and answer these questions, share your responses with your supervisor in your next one-on-one meeting. Ask for help as needed.

1. When someone asks you where you work or what you do, how precisely and clearly can you describe what your Club or Youth Center is, who it serves, and what it does for kids? Why is it important to be able to do this well?

2. How evident are the Core Beliefs in your Club? What can you do in your own work to embody the Core Beliefs?

3. Which components of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience are easiest for you to embrace and put into practice in your day-to-day work?

4. Which components of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience are the most challenging for you to embrace and put into practice in your day-to-day work? What supports do you need to overcome those challenges?

5. How well do you feel you can put the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development into practice at this time? What supports do you need to make them part of your day-to-day practice?

Suggested Action Steps and Resources

To build your knowledge and skills on the Formula for Impact and the components of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience:

Visit the [BGCA.net](https://www.bgca.net) Training page to access Spillett Leadership University. Log in and use the search function to find a full range of learning opportunities for Club professionals in varying roles. These include in-service learning modules facilitated by certified learning coaches, online courses, and instructor-led sessions and workshops.

To better put into practice the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development:

Use these online, mobile-friendly tools. The [YDToolbox mobile app](#) helps Club staff and managers build their youth development skills with over 100 tools tied to the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development. Download the app for free on the Google Play or Apple stores by searching for “YDToolbox,” or access it on your computer at ydtoolbox.goodbarber.com.

The **Club Experience Blog** offers activity ideas, learning opportunities and practical wisdom from Club professionals that you can implement to cultivate a high-quality Club Experience. Access the blog on the [YDToolbox mobile app](#) or online: clubexperience.blog.

To get tools and resources for improving program quality and the Club Experience:

Visit [BGCA.net/ProgramQuality](https://www.bgca.net/ProgramQuality). This page offers easy, one-stop access to many helpful tools and resources for Club organizations and sites. For example, the **Club Experience brochure** explains what a high-quality Club Experience is, why it is important, and key drivers for improvement. It gives insights for enhancing program quality and tips for leading a continuous quality improvement process.

BGCA encourages Clubs and Youth Centers to use the David P. Weikart Center’s **Youth Program Quality Assessment** as an observational assessment tool in their efforts to improve program quality. Ask your supervisor if they use this tool in your Club or Youth Center.



Reference Handout: Our Formula for Impact

SECTION 1





Reference Handout: Practicing Social-Emotional Skills to Develop Character

The chart below provides guidance on how your Club or Youth Center can focus on developing specific character traits using social-emotional skills. Strive to have youth practice these social-emotional skills in all Targeted Programs, activities, and High-Yield Activities they participate in, across the three priority outcome areas of Academic Success, Good Character and Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles.

Social-Emotional Skills for Youth to Practice

Character Traits	Social-Emotional Skills for Youth to Practice																
	Empathy	Communication	Perspective-Taking	Social Awareness	Inclusion	Self-Awareness	Ethical Responsibility	Conflict Management and Resolution	Perseverance	Self-Regulation	Identifying Emotions	Stress Management	Recognizing Strengths	Teamwork	Evaluating	Self-Efficacy	Identify and Solve Problems
Respect: Treating others with honor and dignity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓												
Fairness: Treating all people with dignity and respect, without favoritism or discrimination	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓									
Trustworthiness: The ability to be relied on as honest or truthful		✓		✓			✓		✓	✓							
Responsibility: Taking ownership of thoughts, words and actions	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Caring: Displaying kindness and concern for others	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓										
Citizenship: Behavior exercised by a person who is a member of a community		✓					✓							✓	✓	✓	✓

What You Might See Young People Doing

Respect	Fairness	Trustworthiness	Responsibility	Caring	Citizenship
Youth work together and communicate effectively with one another, even when there are disagreements.	Youth recognize and balance the needs of others. They make good decisions where they recognize and value the contribution of others.	Youth make ethical choices and communicate them to others honestly and respectfully. Youth follow through on commitments to self and others to accomplish a common objective.	Youth recognize how their behavior affects others in positive and negative ways.	Youth appreciate, understand and have compassion for the feelings, experiences and perspectives of others. Youth demonstrate compassion for others through ethically responsible actions.	Youth understand community issues and dynamics, and collaborate to find a solution. Youth creatively use resources in order to solve problems and positively affect the well-being of others and community.



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Reference Handout:

Inclusion Guidelines

Inclusion is another core component for building a safe, positive environment in your Club or Youth Center. Youth will feel physically and emotionally secure when everyone is focused on making sure ALL youth feel included. In order to fulfil our mission, Clubs and Youth Centers must create safe, positive and inclusive environments for youth of every race, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic status, religion or cultural belief. When we create inclusive environments at our Clubs and Youth Centers, we improve the overall experience for all young people.

The inclusion standards ensure ALL youth:

- Feel represented
- Have a sense of belonging
- Can meaningfully participate in programming

1. All youth have access to program spaces and materials.

Clubs and Youth Centers are required to act in a non-discriminatory manner, and to make reasonable accommodations to provide equal opportunity and service to all youth. Part of your work is to ensure youth do not have any physical barriers to prevent them from having an Outcome-Driven Club Experience. Your program space should include materials and resources that all youth can use in order to participate fully in activities.

How it looks when done well:

- Indoor and outdoor spaces are accessible to those with disabilities.
- Barriers that prevent youth from accessing program spaces and materials are regularly identified and addressed.
- Equipment, materials, and tools are appropriate for a wide range of abilities and adapted as necessary to support participation.

How to do it:

- Hang book bags on hooks, rather than allow them to be scattered around the room. This will help keep the floor free of obstacles for youth using mobility supports.
- Include sensory-friendly toys in your Club, such as bubbles, Slinkys, play dough, putty, squishy balls and toys, beads and kaleidoscopes.
- Use equipment that supports diverse needs. This could include adjustable goals, adjustable tables, various sized balls, accessible slides and swings.

Search for Examples of Possible Accommodations for Youth With Disabilities on [BGCA.net](https://www.bgca.net).

2. All youth are able to engage in meaningful participation.

To ensure emotional safety in a positive Club climate, make sure all youth are able to participate in a meaningful way. Your job is to create a welcoming setting in which youth can play and feel like they belong. Giving youth opportunities to participate and succeed, no matter their background or ability, is part of high-quality youth development. When you give youth opportunities to engage in program activities and have high expectations for them, they are able to realize their potential.

SECTION

1

The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs

How it looks when done well:

- Activities follow a natural skill progression and provide members with opportunities to be introduced to, develop and master new skills.
- Reasonable accommodations are made as necessary to support individual needs.
- Adjustments are made to activity requirements, and/or additional options are created as necessary to promote meaningful participation.

How to do it:

- Break down tasks into manageable parts as needed. In other words, give directions in small chunks so youth can follow along.
- Use picture schedules, pictures with words, sign language or visual communication to increase comprehension in an activity.
- Facilitate activities so that new instructions, rules or challenges are introduced one round at a time, instead of all at once.

Search for the Inclusion Checklist for Clubs on [BGCA.net](https://www.bgca.net).

3. There is a clear commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

You have the opportunity to create a climate where youth see themselves reflected positively in the space. By implementing this standard, you will ensure youth are emotionally secure and feel like they belong.

How it looks when done well:

- Club space and activities reflect youths' diverse backgrounds, abilities and identities.
- Staff interactions foster respect for individual differences.
- Staff support peer interactions by encouraging collaboration, teamwork and positive communication.

How to do it:

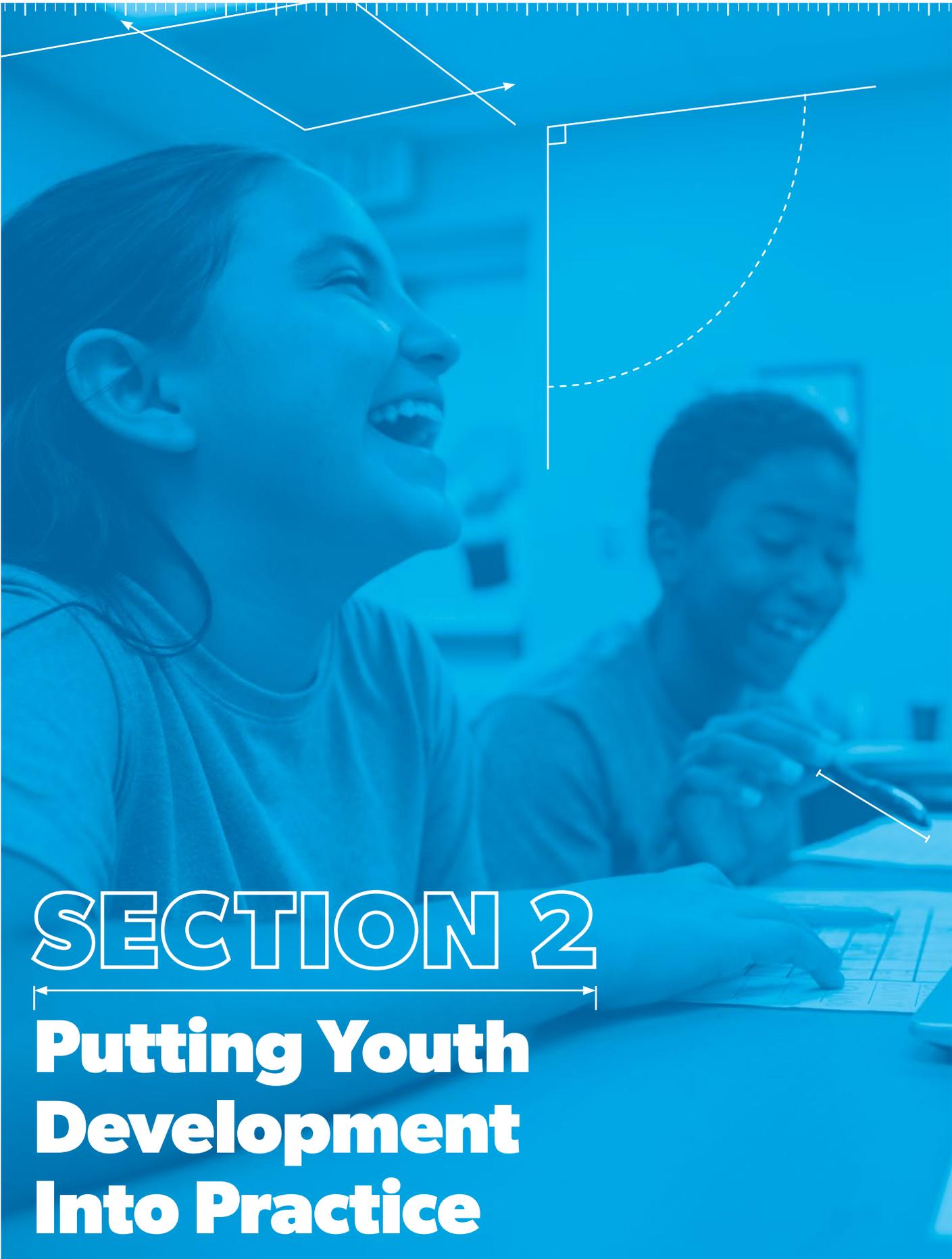
- Post pictures of youth on the wall that reflect ALL youth in your Club.
- Include books, posters, games, and other materials featuring characters and pictures of people with diverse backgrounds, identities and abilities.
- Display flags from different countries, and make sure materials are labeled in multiple languages.

Search for Inclusive Club Goals and Top Tips for Inclusive Clubs on [BGCA.net](https://www.bgca.net).

NOTES:

SECTION 1

The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs



SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development Into Practice



Section Summary:

Putting Youth Development Into Practice

Practicing the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development

At Boys & Girls Clubs, we implement the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development. When planning and delivering programs for and with youth, focus on these elements every day; they provide the essential foundation of your programming.

1. Safe, Positive Environment

For program planning, your primary goal is to reinforce physical and emotional safety.

Essential staff practice: Ensure all youth are positively engaged in your program area or experience. Regularly plan opportunities for youth to connect and get to know one another.

For program delivery, your primary goal is to ensure youth are positively engaged in the program space.

Essential staff practice: Facilitate discussion. Recognize and address negative behavior by identifying the cause with those involved. Give youth the opportunity to share their perspective and emotions, then guide them toward solutions.

2. Fun and Sense of Belonging

For program planning, your primary goal is to plan activities that are fun for you and the youth you serve.

Essential staff practice: Plan opportunities for youth to make choices within your activity or Targeted Program.

For program delivery, your primary goal is to ensure youth want to continue to participate.

Essential staff practice: Provide opportunities for youth to make choices within programs and activities to shape the direction of their experience.

3. Supportive Relationships With Peers and Adults

For program planning, your primary goal is to ensure youth feel connected to adults and peers.

Essential staff practice: Include enough time in your session or activity plan to get to know kids and teens as individuals, and develop meaningful relationships built on trust and support.

For program delivery, your primary goal is to ensure the engagement and inclusion of all youth.

Essential staff practice: Create ongoing and consistent opportunities for youth to share what they are feeling in your program area.

PURPOSE/AUDIENCE

For **youth development professionals**, **site-level program directors** and **site directors**, this section uses our Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development as the scaffold for a rich set of practice tips to strengthen program planning and delivery. It explains the importance of developing character by infusing social-emotional skills into every aspect of programming.

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development Into Practice



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4. Opportunities and Expectations

For program planning, your primary goals are to create opportunities for youth to develop skills and consistently reinforce expectations for behavior and participation in activities.

Essential Staff Practice: Provide a balance of activity types in each program/session time, including youth-led, adult-directed and self-directed activities.

For program delivery, your primary goal is to encourage the success of all young people.

Essential Staff Practice: Engage kids and teens in setting rules and expectations that promote respect in peer and adult relationships.

5. Recognition

For program planning, your primary goal is to ensure that, in each program area, youth have an opportunity to recognize their peers.

Essential Staff Practice: Provide pre-planned, structured opportunities for youth to publicly recognize their peers' efforts and accomplishments.

For program delivery, your goal is to provide recognition using encouragement.

Essential Staff Practice: Observe and recognize what youth are interested in. During the session, recognize youth efforts. Take notice and acknowledge moments when youth are trying. ■

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development
Into Practice

Putting Youth Development Into Practice



The way you interact with youth makes a difference in the way young people engage in and with their Club Experience. This section will share how to incorporate the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development into your practice as a youth development professional in a Boys & Girls Club or Youth Center setting. These practices are critical to developing the whole child.

Practicing the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development

The Outcome-Driven Club Experience in our Formula for Impact has features that work together to develop core social-emotional skills in youth and help them to achieve positive outcomes in the three priority outcome areas. The features of an Outcome-Driven Club Experience are:

- High-Yield Activities
- Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development
- Regular Attendance
- Targeted Programs

The first feature of an Outcome-Driven Club Experience, Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development, unlocks the other features. To ensure positive youth outcomes, Boys & Girls Clubs implement these Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development:

- Safe, positive environment
- Supportive relationships with peers and adults
- Recognition
- Opportunities and expectations
- Fun and sense of belonging

The Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development are the foundation for planning and delivering programs. Think of this first feature of an Outcome-Driven Club Experience as a vehicle to building relationships and trust with youth in order to engage them and deepen their participation. Let's explore each of the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development in greater detail.



Safe, Positive Environment

Every Club and Youth Center must be a place where young people feel physically and emotionally safe; are able to form positive, healthy relationships with staff and peers; and can engage fully in programs and activities. Establishing a safe, positive environment is an important step in achieving youth engagement because it helps to forge trust and a sense of belonging. Staff do their part to ensure youth experience an inclusive place that is free from judgment and bullying. As a result, youth learn to be empathetic and caring because the adults in the Club or Youth Center consistently model these traits.

Physical Safety

A physically safe and secure Club has an environment where recognized hazards are controlled so people are protected from harm. Start by identifying

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what improvements your Club needs to keep members safe. Share your findings with your supervisor. Look for physical safety hazards in places like the neighborhood, shared facilities, extensive grounds, large buildings, bathrooms, private areas and irregular layouts.

Use these everyday practices:

- When outdoors, be observant and communicate any external threats, such as severe weather or an unknown person or vehicle.
- Make sure you can clearly see youth in every program space, whether indoors or outdoors.
- Conduct regular walk-throughs to check stairwells, bathrooms and hallways where youth can drop out of sight or be unsupervised.
- Make sure unused areas are locked properly, with no exterior doors propped open.
- Keep the Club clean, organized and free of hazards.
- Monitor Club activities, evaluate settings and take immediate action to prevent physical injuries, abductions, sexual abuse or accidental death.
- Communicate defined policies and procedures; ensure staff are oriented to them and implement them consistently.

As a youth development professional, know what physical, administrative, electronic or technology-based solutions your Club or Youth Center has in place. Using these will ensure the physical safety of youth, staff, volunteers, parents and other stakeholders. Having policies and procedures in place and abiding by them is vital. Following such procedures reduces the chance of injuries and promotes a shared awareness. Consider the following when developing and enforcing a safety policy in your Club:

- Adhere to relevant local and state laws and your organization's licensing, safety, and reporting policies and procedures.
- Restore safety by having an up-to-date Emergency Operations Plan.
- Conduct training and drills regularly so everyone can respond in emergencies.

RESOURCE

To assess areas of risk that require safety improvements at the site and organizational levels, and to receive automatic recommendations and links to safety resources, complete the online Child Safety Organizational Assessment: [BGCA.net/ChildSafety/Assessment](https://www.bgca.net/ChildSafety/Assessment).

Emotional Safety

If youth do not feel emotionally safe, then they simply do not feel safe at all. Prioritizing emotional safety helps Clubs and Youth Centers create positive experiences, relationships and environments.

Emotional safety relates to how safe youth feel in expressing their emotions, how secure and confident they feel taking healthy risks, and how excited and confident they are to try new things. To achieve emotional safety in your Club or Youth Center, it's important to build trusting relationships with one another.

How Do I Foster Emotional Safety and Establish Positive, Meaningful Relationships?

Emotional safety requires communication! Below are some tips to get you started.

- Lead Community Builders so youth can get to know one another and work with those they normally would not work with.
- Create spaces within program areas where youth can work together in large groups, small groups and individually; have several seating options for a variety of youth needs.

SECTION
2Putting Youth Development
Into Practice



- Display Group Agreements in program areas to create structure and routine.
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage self-reflection. Such questions don't have a single right answer, so they give youth a variety of possible responses.
- Let youth share a high, something good that happened to them, and a low, something negative that happened, during the day.
- Provide additional opportunities for youth to share their stories and listen to others'. This allows youth to practice relating to each other with acceptance and understanding.
- Address conflict consistently by identifying the problem, facilitating conversation between the youth in conflict, and helping them to determine a solution.

The Principles of Program Planning and Delivery section of this BLUEprint provides more information about Community Builders and Group Agreements, some of the Elements of a High-Quality Session.

Tips for Planning to Support a Safe, Positive Environment

Your primary goal is to reinforce physical and emotional safety.

Essential staff practice: Ensure all youth are positively engaged in your program area or experience. Regularly plan opportunities for youth to connect and get to know one another.

Plan how to facilitate Group Agreements during your first activity or session with a group. You could do this for each age group or grade level in your program area. Prepare to lead your group(s) in answering three questions:¹¹

- How do we want to feel in _____ ?
- What will we do to have these feelings every day?
- What will we do when we have conflict?

Double-check any equipment, materials, or tools needed for your activities are appropriate for a wide range of abilities and can be adapted to support participation. This also helps to ensure there are enough materials for everyone participating so no one feels left out.

Anything can happen during the Club day, so think of activity adjustments in case you need to quickly change course. Plan additional activity options to ensure all youth can participate – no matter what their ability level is.

Tips for Delivery to Support a Safe, Positive Environment

Your primary goal is to ensure youth are positively engaged in the program space.

Essential staff practice: Facilitate discussion. Recognize and address negative behavior by identifying the cause with the young people involved. Give youth the opportunity to share their perspectives and emotions, and guide them toward solutions.

- Develop Group Agreements and post them in a visible area during the first activity or session. Refer to the Agreements throughout the session and in subsequent sessions.

NOTES:

RESOURCES

Visit the [YDToolbox mobile app](#) for a variety of Community Builder activities.

Search for the Positive Club Climate Guide on [BGCA.net](#). This guide provides a process to facilitate Group Agreements.

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development Into Practice



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- Observe youth emotions and mood changes by listening actively. Establish a quiet area in the program space where youth can choose to go for time to themselves.
- Use the last 10 minutes of each session to reflect on youths' experiences.
- Remind youth about their specific contributions to an activity.

Tips for listening actively:¹²

- Use nonverbal cues and maintain eye contact.
- Identify feelings and empathize.
- Hold back and let youth speak.
- Remember the context and details.

Tips for encouraging success:

- Participate alongside youth.
- Encourage youth to describe their plans, feelings and goals.
- Make specific comments.
- Avoid judgment and be honest.

Steps for Responding to Youth Conflict¹³

1. Approach young people calmly.
2. Acknowledge youth feelings and recognize the inappropriate action.
3. Stop the behavior and gather information.
4. Restate the problem.
5. Ask for solutions by using open-ended questions to help youth reflect on their behavior.
6. Follow up. Clarify expectations by referring to Group Agreements, rules and limits.

Use these questions to help youth reflect on how they expressed themselves, consider how another person might have been affected, and reflect and plan on what they can do to change their behavior.

- What happened? How did you feel? How did _____ feel?
- What caused your feelings? What caused _____'s feelings?
- How did you express your feelings? How did _____ express their feelings?
- What could you have done to handle the situation better? What can you do now?
- What consequence is best suited for your actions?
- What is the agreement?

Provide youth opportunities to reflect and work through their feelings when dealing with conflict. Also provide guidance and support in this reflection.

Ask the Club director or another staff member to step into your program area so you can work with the young person(s) having a difficult time.

RESOURCE

Visit the [YDToolbox mobile app](#) for sample ways to facilitate reflection.

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development Into Practice



Fun and Sense of Belonging

Generating fun and fostering a sense of belonging are essential to youth development work. Several key factors influence fun and sense of belonging in your Club or Youth Center:

- Staff creativity
- Youth input
- Opportunities for youth leadership roles
- Opportunities for youth to choose their activities
- Diversity of experiences offered
- Cultivating a home- or family-like atmosphere

Young people need to have fun just for the sake of having fun. But, fun is also a means of breaking down boundaries and building trust. Fun and play are vehicles for learning. Youth have fun when they are laughing, when they fully engage in an experience, when they enjoy an experience so much they're sad when it is over, and when they choose to take on leadership roles. Fun is the gateway to Regular Attendance and deeper engagement in programs and activities! When youth experience a family-like environment, a home away from home, a community with a shared identity and common goals, they feel a strong sense of belonging.

How Do I Ensure Young People Have Fun in the Club or Youth Center?

There are many things you can do to make sure your Club or Youth Center is a fun place to be. It's all about giving young people choices! Let youth help set the direction of your programming. Keep them involved in the planning and delivery of programs, and let them define leadership roles for themselves and their peers. Give young people opportunities to choose relevant and meaningful activities throughout the day. Regularly rotate games, activities and programs to ensure they have a variety of new things to do. Keep it interesting by playing music during program area transitions, or lead play breaks throughout the day.

Another important factor to making sure young people have fun is the program space. Pay attention to the aesthetics and layout! Provide various seating options. These should be comfortable and allow youth to work in groups or individually. Provide tables, soft pillows or couches, various lighting options, rugs, etc. All of this makes your space inviting and contributes to a fun place where youth choose to be.

Use these everyday practices:

- Regularly ask youth what types of activities, programs or experiences would be fun, engaging, and would attract other youth who do not yet attend the Club.
- Partner with youth to create and facilitate activities, programs and experiences to ensure youth voice.
- During activities, ask youth to give a thumbs-up if the activity is fun, or a thumbs-down if they aren't enjoying it. If you receive a majority of thumbs down, ask youth what would improve the activity.

NOTES:

RESOURCE

Search for the Play Breaks Guide on BGCA.net for spontaneous play breaks that can be used to incorporate fun throughout your program day.

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development Into Practice



NOTES:

- Be spontaneous! Re-invent recurring happenings, such as youth assemblies or snack time, to make them more fun. What if all the staff dressed up in costumes that represented the types of activities happening in their program spaces?

Tips for Planning to Create Fun and a Sense of Belonging

Your primary goal is to ensure you plan activities that are fun for you and youth.

Essential staff practice: Plan opportunities for youth to make choices within your activity or Targeted Program.

Use a current youth trend as a lever to create an experience that is timely, relevant and fun. For example, if an appropriate dance, song, documentary or TV show is popular, think about how you can incorporate it into your program session.

Determine what leadership roles are available for your session, and post them in a visible area. Youth roles to advertise could include co-facilitator, timekeeper, observer and supply distributor. Post job descriptions on notecards for each role so youth know what is expected of them during the session.

Tips for Delivery to Create Fun and a Sense of Belonging

Your primary goal is to ensure youth want to continue to participate.

Essential staff practice: Provide opportunities for youth to make choices within programs and activities to shape the direction of their experience.

Introduce the leadership roles that are available for the session. Have youth sign up before you get started. Provide the job descriptions so applicants are able to fulfill their roles.

Include reflection questions at the end of your session to find out what youth liked or disliked. Conduct a Pulse Check to gauge how fun the session was by asking youth to give you a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down.



Supportive Relationships with Peers and Adults

Supportive relationships include interactions staff-to-staff, staff-to-youth and youth-to-youth. Every child and teen should feel connected to one or more adults and peers. They should observe warmth, caring, appreciation and acceptance when staff interact. With proper guidance in your interactions with youth, they will learn how to build healthy relationships with adults and their peers, based on trust and mutual respect. When supportive relationships exist, staff know young people's interests, likes, dislikes and passions. Youth have a variety of opportunities to work with their peers in small groups, large groups, and independently during sessions and activities.

Strength-Based Approach

A strength-based approach emphasizes the strengths of young people, rather than their deficits. The goal is to build on youths' resiliency and help them believe they can be successful. In other words, a strength-based approach

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development Into Practice



identifies what a young person does well, finds ways for them to do more of it, and then builds upon those skills.

So focus on building up the positive, rather than preventing the negative. Use the strength-based approach to cultivate supportive relationships and trust with young people.

How Do I Build Supportive Relationships?

Learn young people's names and call them by their names while you're with them.

Ask youth relevant open-ended questions. Frame questions in ways youth can win in the conversation! For example, if you have a young person who has a habit of leaving his backpack at school, refrain from saying: "Tom, you left your backpack again?" Instead, try an open-ended question that allows him to reflect on what is preventing bringing the backpack from school: "Tom, what would help you remember to bring your backpack from school each day?" Then actively listen to his response. Help him understand the consequences of leaving his backpack at school, and set a goal for bringing the backpack next time.

Help young people get to know their peers. During times of transition throughout the year – such as at the beginning of the school year or at the beginning of summer programming – pair each new young person with a buddy or "family group." You may also consider creating homerooms, where youth of a similar age group or interest come together each day at a designated time to build community and regroup. For tips on setting up and conducting homerooms for the young people in your Club or Youth Center, see the Reference Handout: Integrating Homeroom Into Your Schedule at the end of this section.

Tips for asking effective questions.¹⁴

- Ask lots of open-ended, relevant, challenging questions.
- Balance questions with comments and dialogue.
- Make sure every young person in the group has input.

Tips for Planning to Develop Supportive Relationships

Your primary goal is to ensure youth feel connected to adults and peers.

Essential staff practice: Include enough time in your session or activity plan to get to know kids and teens as individuals, and develop meaningful relationships built on trust and support.

- Build in time to review Group Agreements, expectations, rules and program limits.
- When planning your session, provide multiple activity options.
- Allow youth to work with others who have similar interests.
- Plan opportunities within your session to divide youth into smaller groups to complete tasks.

NOTES:

RESOURCE

Visit the [YDToolbox mobile app](#) for groupers. These are quick activities to divide large groups into smaller groups.

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development Into Practice



NOTES:

Rules, Expectations, Group Agreements and Limits

Clubs and Youth Centers set rules or behavioral expectations to keep youth and staff members safe. These expectations are typically set by adults and are fixed, meaning they do not change.

Some Clubs and Youth Centers include youth in their process of establishing agreed-upon behavioral expectations to ensure everyone's physical and emotional safety. These expectations are typically referred to as Group Agreements.

And then there are limits. These refer to the parameters of specific activities that take place in a particular program space. For example, it could include the amount of time young people can spend at different activity stations, or the types of materials they can use there.

Tips for Delivery to Develop Supportive Relationships

Your primary goal is to ensure the engagement and inclusion of all youth.

Essential staff practice: Create ongoing and consistent opportunities for youth to share what they are feeling in your program area.

As youth arrive in your program space, ask them to form a circle. First, review the Group Agreements. Then, facilitate a conversation starter. To do this, pose an open-ended question for everyone in the group to answer. Here are 10 sample conversation starters to get you going:

- If you were the weather today, what would you be?
- What is something that makes you laugh?
- When do you feel at your very best?
- What do you dream about doing most?
- If you could meet any celebrity today, who would it be?
- If you could paint the sky any color, what would it be?
- If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would it be?
- If there was a movie made about your life, who would be the actor or actress to play you?
- What is your favorite food?
- What are you most curious about?

Next, introduce an attention getter, or have youth come up with one of their own. This can be used throughout the session to get the group's attention in a respectful and engaging way. For example, when you are running a group meeting or assembly with a large group of youth, tell everyone when they hear you say, "Peanut Butter," they should say, "Jelly Time!" Then all eyes and ears should be on the person leading the attention getter.

Finally, before youth engage in activities, use a grouper to divide them into smaller groups. This will allow everyone an opportunity to work with new people.

RESOURCE

Visit the [YDToolbox mobile app](#) for attention getters to try out.

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development Into Practice



Opportunities and Expectations

Youth need to develop physical, cognitive, social and emotional skills to be productive, contributing members of their communities. Staff should acknowledge youths' strengths, and use them as a starting point to build other essential skills they may be missing. Using youths' strengths as a foundation, youth development professionals can establish and reinforce high expectations. This helps young people do well in school, pursue a postsecondary education, and ensure workforce readiness. Because staff offer youth opportunities and encourage them to set goals that raise their own expectations, young people learn to be accountable to themselves and others.

When opportunities and expectations are in place, staff plan activities, programs, and experiences that expose youth to new ideas and concepts. This challenges youth to move beyond their comfort zones. Staff provide both self-guided and staff-led learning opportunities that support youth skill development. They actively support individual youth in setting and achieving personal goals, carve out time for youth to think about something they need to pursue, and ask questions to guide the goal-setting process. Staff provide a variety of options in youth program spaces.

How Do I Create Opportunities and Expectations?

- Provide youth with visual and verbal reminders about the expectations for behavior and participation.
- Create routines for how youth arrive in your program space, choose activities to participate in, access and return materials, clean up the program space, and transition and depart from your program space.
- Share opportunities that will allow youth to stretch beyond what they are comfortable or accustomed to doing.

For ideas on setting up a daily schedule full of new opportunities, both structured and less-structured, review the Reference Handout: Scheduling Opportunities and Expectations at the end of this section.

Tips for Planning to Support Opportunities and Expectations

Your primary goals are to create opportunities for youth to develop skills and consistently reinforce expectations for behavior and participation in activities.

Essential Staff Practice: Provide a balance of activity types in each program/session time, including youth-led, adult-directed and self-directed activities.

Determine the objective and purpose of each activity, and prepare to effectively communicate this when delivering your session plan.

Plan reflection questions that specifically relate to the new experiences your activities will introduce. Try questions like:

- What is something new that you learned today?
- What was challenging? Why is having a challenge important?
- What new skills did you gain? Why are these important? Where else could you use these skills?

NOTES:

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development
Into Practice



NOTES:

Tips for Delivery to Support Opportunities and Expectations

Your primary goal is to encourage the success of all young people.

Essential Staff Practice: Engage kids and teens in setting rules and expectations that promote respect in peer and adult relationships.

Check in and remind youth of the Group Agreements before implementing your session plan. Give the group a chance to add to the Agreements, if needed. When introducing activity options, state the goal and objective of each activity. Then reiterate the expectations for youth participation in those specific activities. Finally, during the Main Activity, participate along with youth by trying out key aspects of the activity.

Refer back to the tips for Safe, Positive Environment, which are also useful for encouraging success.



Recognition

Caring adults acknowledge young people's innate strengths and talents. They use authentic gestures and encouragement to positively reinforce their efforts and persistence, and they celebrate their progress and successes. They commend good decisions and choices. Clubs and Youth Centers showcase youth achievements on walls, bulletin boards and monitors, during assemblies and special events, or in newsletters or social media posts. As a result, Clubs and Youth Centers formally and informally affirm young people's self-worth and boost their sense of competence. Young people gain confidence in their abilities to try new things and succeed in those new experiences.

Recognition can be informal – in-the-moment acknowledgment of effort and contribution – or formal – certificates or title designations, like Youth of the Week/Month/Year. In cases where there is competition, recognition may be limited to the one young person who is deemed a winner or holds a specific title designation. It is important, especially in those instances, to remember to recognize, acknowledge and encourage all youth. When youth experience disappointment in competitive experiences, encourage them to continue to try hard and persevere to overcome challenges.

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development Into Practice



Encouragement Versus Praise

No matter how you choose to recognize young people, seek to offer encouragement rather than praise.

Why? When you praise a young person, you provide general and non-specific statements based on how you judge their actions. But, when you offer encouragement, you give specific observations about their effort.

Praise = being judgmental and not specific

Example of a praise statement: “Tiffany, you did great!”

Encouragement = being nonjudgmental and specific

Example of an encouragement statement: “John, I noticed that when you were frustrated during the activity, you took the breaks you needed to complete the task. This really made a difference in your group finishing the activity. What was your experience like?”

NOTES:

SECTION 2

How Can I Include Meaningful Recognition in Each Club Day?

Recognition should be a regular part of the Club Experience. For a sample schedule featuring a variety of programs and activities that support recognition, see the [Reference Handout: Building Recognition Into Each Club Day](#) at the end of this section.

To get started, follow these tips, and you’ll be well on your way.

- Develop a clearly defined recognition system, including both informal and formal recognition opportunities.
- Always seek to recognize youth interests, efforts and accomplishments.
- Collaborate with young people! Form a youth recognition committee, and develop ways to recognize others both informally and formally.
- Look for moments when a young person is taking a risk. Specifically acknowledge that they tried a new activity or persevered when things got tough. Use language like: “I noticed how you really picked up speed at the end of the relay race. You were really working hard for your team.”
- Seek to offer encouragement rather than praise, as in the example above. Encouragement is a non-judgmental and specific comment that identifies effort the young person makes.

Tips for Planning to Support Recognition

Your primary goal is to ensure that, in each program area, youth have an opportunity to recognize their peers.

Essential Staff Practice: Provide pre-planned, structured opportunities for youth to publicly recognize their peers’ efforts and accomplishments.

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development
Into Practice



NOTES:

When creating your session plan, include sufficient time for youth to recognize their peers at the end of each session. This can be done in a variety of ways.

- The recognition committee should establish a list of creative categories to recognize others.
- Go down the list of categories and ask youth to recognize the peer who best demonstrated the category during this program time.
- Keep track visually of who is recognized, and hold the group accountable to make sure all youth have an opportunity.
- Open each recognition activity for shout-outs, so youth can acknowledge peers for their effort during the session.

Tips for Delivery to Support Recognition

Your primary goal is to provide recognition using encouragement. (See sidebar: Encouragement Versus Praise.)

Essential Staff Practice: Observe and recognize what youth are interested in. Ask them:

- What do you love doing?
- What have you always wanted to try?
- What is something you want to learn how to do?
- What is something you want to learn more about?
- What is something that you have tried before, or seen someone else doing, that you want us to do here?

During the session, recognize youth efforts. Take notice and acknowledge moments when they are trying. Acknowledge the effort right when it's happening, and be specific with your statements so youth attribute the recognition to a specific task.

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development Into Practice

Next Steps for Learning: Putting Youth Development Into Practice



Take your learning to the next level using these reflection questions and resources.

Reflection Questions for Youth Development Professionals

After you think about and answer these questions, share your responses with your supervisor in your next one-on-one meeting. Ask for help as needed.

1. What are your strengths in putting the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development into practice? Think of an example working with youth that highlights this strength.

2. What Key Element for Positive Youth Development do you want to work on most? What will it look like to practice and improve?

3. Based on what you learned, what is one change you will make in how you interact with youth and model behavior for them?



Reflection Questions for Club Directors

Use these questions in your regular staff meetings to create an opportunity for staff to reflect on how the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development are showing up in your Club or Youth Center.

1. How are the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development displayed in our Club or Youth Center? What specific examples do you see?

2. What barriers are you experiencing when implementing the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development?

3. What are our greatest opportunities for improving the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development?

4. What support do you need in order to implement the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development consistently?



Suggested Training for Youth Development Professionals

To support your implementation of the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development and the youth development practices that support them, visit the [BGCA.net](https://www.bgca.net) Training page to access Spillet Leadership University. Log in and use the search function to find a full range of learning opportunities for Club and Youth Center staff in the School of Youth Development. These include in-service learning modules facilitated by certified learning coaches, online courses, and instructor-led sessions and workshops. Here are some specific learning opportunities pertaining to the topic of this section of the BLUEprint.

Webinars on Emotional Safety and Inclusion

- Supporting Youth With ADHD Through Meaningful Relationships
- Designing Club Environments to Support Sensory Needs
- Creating a Welcoming and Respectful Membership Application Process
- Creating a Sense of Belonging for Youth With Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Building Supportive Relationships for Youth With High Social-Emotional Needs

Online Courses and Learning Coach In-Service Modules

- Emotional Intelligence at Boys & Girls Clubs
- Creating Collaboratives
- Strengthening Character Through Guidance and Discipline

Youth Development Institute

This interactive, hands-on opportunity provides youth development professionals with practical skills geared to improve the quality of their interactions with youth. It utilizes some of the [Youth Work Methods](#) from the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, including Structure and Clear Limits, Ask-Listen-Encourage, and Reframing Conflict.



NOTES:

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development
Into Practice

Reference Handout: Integrating Homeroom Into Your Schedule

Schedule homeroom time after youth decompress from school – either by encouraging physical activity, playing with friends, or having quiet time. Start by creating homeroom groups with members of similar grades, and keep homeroom staff consistent with each group. Include time for completing homework according to their age. Staff overseeing each homeroom should become familiar with the type and amount of homework assigned, and support members in their completion.

Homeroom should be a place where youth have fun and interact with their peers. So, make sure homework isn't the only thing youth do there. Offer several self-directed projects for them to work on when they complete their homework. Facilitate community-building activities, where youth get a chance to know each other and make friends. As the year progresses, assign homeroom members to choose and lead the community-building activities with their peers. Keep a structured schedule, but alternate recognition and community-building activities. See the two sample schedules below for ideas.

Sample Homeroom Schedule for First and Second Graders (3:45-4:45 p.m.)

- Warm Welcome and emotional check-in board (5 min.)
- Homeroom shout-outs for youth to recognize their peers (5 min.)
- Circle homework goal check-in (5 min.)
(Have each member share their assigned homework, a goal for homeroom, and what they will do if they complete their homework while it's still work time.)
- Quiet homework/project time (20 min.)
- Clean-up and transition (5 min.)
- Create celebration dance with partner and dance party (15 min.)
- Review afternoon schedule and have members share with their dance partner what sessions they want to attend (5 min.)

Sample Homeroom Schedule for Fifth and Sixth Graders (3:45-4:45 p.m.)

- Warm Welcome (5 min.)
- Emotion sticky notes (3 min.)
(Have everyone write their current emotion on a sticky note and put it near their work space.)
- Homework goal journal (3 min.)
(Members write down what their homework is and a goal for the day.)
- Quiet homework/project time (30 min.)
- Toot Your Horn Tuesday (5 min.)
(Have members share a reason they are proud of themselves.)

Reference Handout: Scheduling Opportunities and Expectations



NOTES:

Choices for youth can look different depending on the nature of your session. Let’s look at a week’s worth of less-structured gym activities. This example is for the beginning of the Club day, when kids are still arriving and joining the session at various times (also called a rolling arrival time).

Gym 2:30–3:45 p.m.				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Hula Hoop, Races or Jump Rope	Tag Games	Line Games	Obstacle Course, Clapping Games or Double Dutch	Basketball Spelling Games

On Monday, Thursday and Friday, young people can choose to participate in any or all of the options set up in the gym. On Monday, stations for hula hooping, various types of races (running, skipping, crab walk, etc.) or jump rope will be available, and youth can try one or all three. Where they spend their time is their choice, but the options are already determined for them.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, there is only one type of activity available in the gym. That’s because both tag and line games take up a lot of space, as they can accommodate large groups. Since there are many types of tag and line games, youth can help decide which games to play. This could be determined the day of, by offering three options and letting the group choose, or in advance by asking members to offer suggestions and vote on a white board. Remember to offer several variations throughout each time frame. Finally, end each game while kids are still having fun, and move onto another variation.

Now let’s look at the art room during a structured time frame. Here you will see layered choices and higher expectations of completion than in the gym’s sample schedule. During the low-structure arrival time above, members move between activities freely. But here, youth choose which session they want to be a part of, and they stay with that activity for the entire session.

Art and Design Nexus 5–6 p.m.				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Tracing Value Word on Printing Foam Ages 6 to 9	Self-Portrait With Natural Materials	Tracing Value Word on Printing Foam Ages 10 to 12	Leadership Skits Ages 8 to 12	Visual Arts Project (Youth and Teens)

Monday, Wednesday and Friday is part of a 10-week Targeted Program – Print Making and Visual Arts Competition – which youth signed up for in advance.



NOTES:

They agreed to attend once a week for the full 10 weeks. This week in Print Making, they are discussing values that are important to them and their families. They chose a value and started their design last week. This week, they will move that design to the printing phase. It's time for big decisions in this activity, which engages youths' creativity. Participants will each have to determine:

- How big will my print be?
- Will some areas be lighter or darker than others?
- What changes do I need to make to my design in order to carve it into foam?

On Thursday, there is a single session that members can choose to attend that day at the Club meeting. When they get into the session, they will talk about leadership and share some examples of leadership in their own lives. Then youth choose a topic and, with their team, make a choice about a leadership scenario they want to act out. Next, they collaborate to select a script, choose playing parts, and pick out costumes and props. For all of these sessions, the choices are intentionally built into the activities, so youth play an active role in the planning process.

As youth are engaged in planning, reserve sufficient time for them to explore new interests and build foundational skills before asking them to commit to a full Targeted Program. Consider this example: Your teens have been watching Step competitions on YouTube and say they want to do Step at the Club. You're excited about offering this new program, and your goal is to have a thriving teen Step team. Consider how an Introduction to Step program might look.

- **Week 1:** Have teens share their favorite Step videos with the group.
- **Week 2:** Organize a field trip or invite a guest speaker to perform.
- **Week 3:** Have the group choose their favorite three videos.
- **Weeks 4 to 6:** Schedule time for teens to watch one of the videos each week and practice the steps; in a casual, less-structured space.
- **Week 7:** Reflect with the group during the open Step time.
- **Week 8:** Have the group choose their favorite two videos.
- **Weeks 9 to 12:** Help participants learn both routines from the videos.
- **Week 13:** Invite participants to perform their routines at the Club meeting.
- **Week 14:** Reflect on performance and team commitment. If members express commitment and want to proceed, try to find a coach for the new Step team. If teens do not express a level of commitment but want to continue, repeat weeks 8 to 14.

You'll notice from the schedule above, **Weeks 1 to 7** are about exploring and building commitment. **Weeks 8 to 14** allow participants to demonstrate application in a low-pressure, self-directed environment before committing to being part of a full team.

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development Into Practice



Reference Handout: Building Recognition Into Each Club Day

Recognition is an important everyday practice at the Club or Youth Center. It requires intentional planning to build important recognition events into your Club schedule. Let's imagine you're planning the weekly schedule for your Club, and you managed to build in five opportunities for recognition. These are highlighted in the sample schedule below.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Art and Design Nexus				
Tracing Value Word on Printing Foam Ages 6 to 9	Self-Portrait With Natural Materials	Tracing Value Word on Printing Foam Ages 10 to 12	Leadership Skits Ages 8 to 12	Visual Arts Project (Youth and Teens)
Learning Alcove				
African-American Leaders 20 Questions Ages 9 to 12	Parks in My Community Ages 10+	Planning Program Showcase	Parks in My Community Ages 6 to 9	Drawing Emotions Ages 6 to 9
Gamesroom				
Cup Stacking Tournament	State Gamesroom Tournament Practice Ages 6 to 10	Fabulous Flags: Character Version	Four Square Tourney/Magic the Gathering	Spider Web
Teen Center				
Posters for Keystone Elections	College-Type Exploration	Planning for Torch Club Fundraiser	Paying for College	Power Hour Party Ages 6 to 9

In the Art and Design Nexus, there is time on Friday for youth to work on their visual arts projects. These projects will be showcased in the winter Visual Arts Competition, and participants will be recognized there. The same principle applies to the State Gamesroom Tournament, where the 6- to 10-year-old members get a chance to practice on Tuesday before representing their Club in the spring tournament. Teens will work on election posters on Monday, in preparation for recognition by their peers in the upcoming Keystone Club election.

On Friday in the Teen Center, a weekly Power Hour party is scheduled to recognize children who reached their homework completion goals during the week, while teen members are scheduled elsewhere. It's a special treat for younger members since the Teen Center is usually off-limits to them.

NOTES:

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development
Into Practice



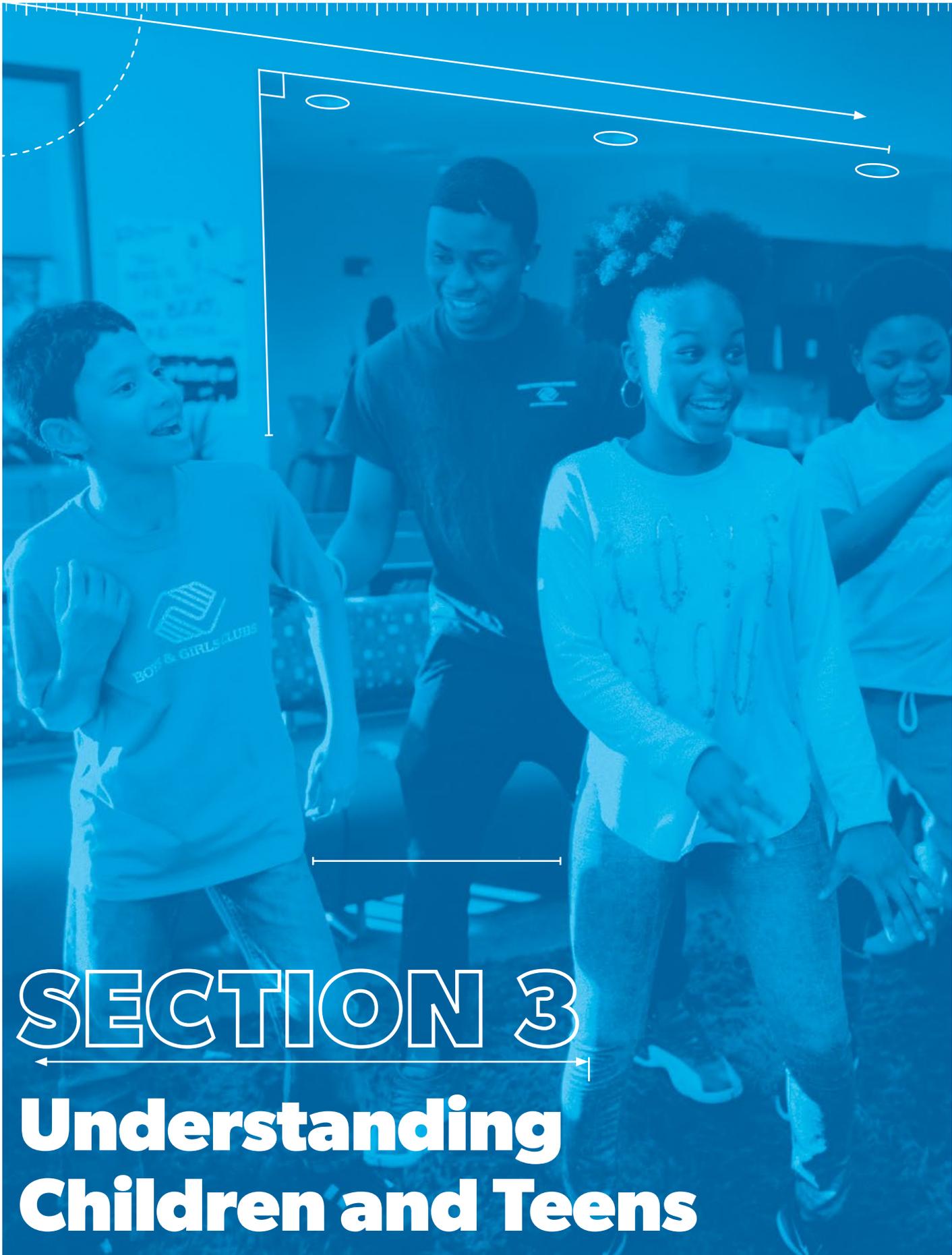
NOTES:

On Wednesday in the Learning Alcove, a weekly session is scheduled for youth who are involved in planning the Program Showcase at the end of the current seasonal schedule, recognizing awesome things youth achieved during this period. This group of young people meets weekly with a staff person to plan the event, create decorations, and pump up the excitement among their peers.

Use these examples to consider how you will recognize the young people in your Club or Youth Center, and allow youth time to plan to recognize each other, too.

SECTION 2

Putting Youth Development Into Practice



SECTION 3

Understanding Children and Teens



PURPOSE/AUDIENCE

All **youth development professionals** need to know the typical developmental characteristics of youth at different ages. This section provides up-to-date, research-based information about the developmental milestones of children and teens. It helps ensure your programming is not only developmentally appropriate, but also progressive. That way, it evolves with youth as they grow and continue building their skills.

SECTION
3Understanding Children
and Teens

Section Summary:

Understanding Children and Teens

All youth development professionals need to know the typical developmental characteristics of children and teens. Apply this knowledge to how you interact with young people, and how you plan and facilitate programs and activities for them.

Developmental Milestones of Children and Teens

As youth grow, they develop physically, emotionally, socially and cognitively. They also gradually define a unique self-identity.

Based on child development research, typical developmental milestones for the general population of youth are organized in certain age groupings: middle/late childhood (6 to 9 and 10 to 12); early adolescence/"tween" (10 to 12 and 13 to 15); and adolescence/teen (13 to 15 and 16 to 18).

But individuals achieve developmental milestones at different times, which is why the age groupings overlap. You may work with kids or teens who don't yet demonstrate certain developmental characteristics considered typical for their age. Yet others may seem to be ahead of their age group in some aspect of their development.

Developmentally Appropriate Programming

All programs and activities should be developmentally appropriate for the youth participating in them. This is one reason why Clubs and Youth Centers traditionally structure their programming around certain age groups.

At your Club or Youth Center, look critically at the content of activities and programs, and at the instructions for delivering them. Make sure they match the developmental characteristics of the age groups you're working with. Based on what you know about youths' particular characteristics and needs, adjust the content or delivery methods to make programming more developmentally appropriate for them.

Use the [Tips for Program Planning and Delivery by Age Range](#) in this section.

Progressive Programming

Members who stay involved over multiple years need programs and activities that evolve along with them as they get older. This is called **progressive programming**. In order to keep youth engaged and challenged, and to build upon their existing knowledge and skills, Targeted Programs especially need to offer a progression. ■

Understanding Children and Teens

All youth development professionals need to be thoroughly familiar with the typical developmental characteristics of children and teens. Apply this knowledge when interacting with young people, and when planning and facilitating their programs and activities. In terms of our Formula for Impact and achieving an Outcome-Driven Club Experience, this means you need to ensure all Targeted Programs and High-Yield Activities are developmentally appropriate for the youth participating in them.

Developmental Milestones of Children and Teens

What does this mean? As youth grow, they develop physically, emotionally, socially and cognitively (relating to or involving conscious intellectual activity, such as thinking, reasoning or remembering). They also gradually define a unique self-identity. Changes in one of these areas often affect changes in another area. For example, as youth get older, they get better at handling their emotions, which affects their relationships with others.

Additionally, individuals achieve developmental milestones at different times. Many factors contribute to this, including family make-up, health conditions and life experiences. So it's very likely that you work with kids or teens who may not yet demonstrate certain developmental characteristics that are considered typical for their age. Or you may work with others who seem to be ahead of their age group in some aspect of their development.

To learn more about the developmental characteristics of children and teens, review the Reference Handout: Developmental Milestones of Children and Teens provided at the end of this section. This chart lists typical developmental characteristics of youth by three age groupings – middle/late childhood (6 to 9 and 10 to 12), early adolescence/"tween" (10 to 12 and 13 to 15), and adolescence/teen (13 to 15 and 16 to 18). It also includes five developmental categories – physical, emotional, social, cognitive and self.

Developmentally Appropriate Programming

Because young people's developmental characteristics change, what works in your programming for one age group probably will not work as well for another. This is one big reason Clubs and Youth Centers traditionally structure their programming around certain age groups.

Look critically at the content of your activities and programs, and consider your instructions for delivering them. Make sure your programming matches the developmental characteristics of the age groups you're working with. Based on what you know about the characteristics and needs of your group, adjust the content or delivery methods to make them more developmentally appropriate.

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Let's say you're playing a game of Keep-Away with a group of 10- to 12-year-olds. You tell them the goal is to throw the ball to their teammates, and for every three passes they make in a row, they will receive one point. You notice the group is having a difficult time earning a point because they can't make three passes in a row. So you adjust the rules. You tell the group their goal is still the same, but this time, for every single pass they make, they will receive a point.

Your homegrown programs, developed by your own Club or Youth Center, also should be developmentally appropriate. If your Club or Youth Center created a program that teaches about local wildlife, it should offer different activities for the various age groups participating. A nature program for a group of 6- to 9-year-olds might involve learning about local animals and hiking on walking trails. For groups of 10- to 12-year-olds or 13- to 15-year-olds, the same program might instead involve learning about conservation and doing conservation projects in the community.

Try some of the following practical programming tips for specific age ranges or developmental stages. Learn more about delivery methods in the BLUEprint section called Principles of Program Planning and Delivery.

Tips for Program Planning and Delivery by Age Range

Middle/Late Childhood: Ages 6 to 9 and 10 to 12

- Include plenty of physical activity and promote healthy eating.
- Keep rules and directions simple. Use posters or visual aids, and frequently reinforce previously learned material.
- Provide a variety of opportunities to help brain development, such as hands-on activities, real-world experiences, and stimulating environments with many objects kids can interact with.
- Help children name and express their emotions in healthy ways.
- Strengthen youths' sense of self and autonomy by encouraging them to explore different opportunities (e.g., "Do you want to do A or B today?"). Recognize them when they build skills and accomplish their goals.
- Model the behavior you want children to learn and copy, since they are still making sense of the social world.

Early Adolescence/"Tween": Ages 10 to 12 and 13 to 15

- Be reliable, consistent and supportive, because this challenging period is marked by transition and change.
- Support young people's emerging autonomy by giving them more voice in programs and activities.
- Provide opportunities for youth to work and interact with friends and peers, which they need at this stage.
- Create opportunities and activities for positive risk-taking, such as rock climbing, zip lining, team sports and service learning. The brains of tweens and teens are wired for risk-taking.

SECTION

3

Understanding Children and Teens

- Respond positively when youth test boundaries, while still reinforcing Club expectations. Youth will test boundaries as they begin to interpret the world and their place in it.
- Help teach boys healthy emotional expression, and help girls develop positive self-esteem.
- Encourage youth to engage in prosocial activities like community service.

Adolescence/Teen: Ages 13 to 15 and 16 to 18

- Provide opportunities for teens to practice skills like decision-making, goal-setting and impulse control.
- Support identity development by providing a variety of experiences and activities. Encourage youth to step outside of their comfort zones.
- Talk with teens about your own experiences and opinions. They learn to think based on their exposure to others' thinking processes.
- Continue to give teens more independence, responsibility and choice in program activities.
- Leverage teens' idealism and passions. Encourage them to identify, plan, and conduct activities and events at the Club or Youth Center, or to address issues they see in the community.

Progressive Programming

A related aspect of providing relevant, appropriate programs and activities for youth is what we call progressive programming. Members who stay involved in your Club or Youth Center over multiple years need programs and activities that evolve along with them. In order to keep such youth engaged and challenged, and build upon their existing knowledge and skills, Targeted Programs especially need to offer a progression.

For example, when youth turn 11, they can join a Torch Club to start learning about leadership, citizenship and service. When Torch Club members turn 14, they can join a Keystone Club to advance their skills in those areas.

In this section, you've increased your knowledge of the typical developmental characteristics of youth at different ages. You've learned how to incorporate that information into your program planning and delivery to ensure it's a good fit developmentally for the youth you serve. You've also learned about the importance of implementing progressive programming that keeps youth engaged and builds upon their skills as they get older.

The next section of the BLUEprint, Principles of Program Planning and Delivery, lays down the basic building blocks of Club programming. Together with the tips for positive youth development practice and developmental appropriateness, you'll be well on your way to enhancing your programs and activities.

NOTES:

SECTION 3

Understanding Children and Teens



Next Steps for Learning: Understanding Children and Teens

Take your learning to the next level using these reflection questions and resources.

Reflection Questions

After you think about and answer these questions, share your responses with your supervisor in your next one-on-one meeting. Ask for help as needed.

1. What new insights have you gained from learning about young people’s developmental milestones? Is there particular information that helps explain something you see in your daily work with youth?

2. Based on what you’ve learned, what is one change you will make in how you interact with youth? What is one change you will make in how you facilitate programs and activities for them?

3. Based on what you’ve learned about the developmental characteristics of youth at different ages, and what you know about yourself, to what degree are your current work assignments a good fit for you?

Suggested Action Steps and Resources

To learn more about the developmental characteristics of children and youth:

Take time to study the Reference Handout: Developmental Milestones of Children and Teens at the end of this section. This chart lists typical developmental characteristics of youth by five categories (physical, emotional, social, cognitive and self), and by three somewhat overlapping age groupings.

With your teammates and supervisor, consider conducting an in-service group study over a number of weeks. You could focus on one category per week, for example, in which everyone reads the information. Then during a regular staff meeting, you could discuss what you learned

and how it applies to your site's youth population and programming. You could use the reflection questions above to guide your discussions, and brainstorm action steps for improvements everyone can make.

To build your skills in implementing developmentally appropriate and progressive programs and activities:

Visit the [BGCA.net](https://www.bgca.net) Training page to access Spillet Leadership University. Log in and use the search function to find a full range of learning opportunities for Club and Youth Center staff in the School of Youth Development. These include in-service learning modules facilitated by certified learning coaches, online courses, and instructor-led sessions and workshops.



Reference Handout:

Developmental Milestones of Children and Teens¹⁵

The developmental milestones outlined here offer a general idea about what to expect from youth of different ages. Young people develop at different rates and in different ways, however, so consider these characteristics as a general rule of thumb. Use this information to implement age-specific and developmentally appropriate programs and activities that best meet the needs of the young people in your Club or Youth Center.

Physical Development

SECTION 3

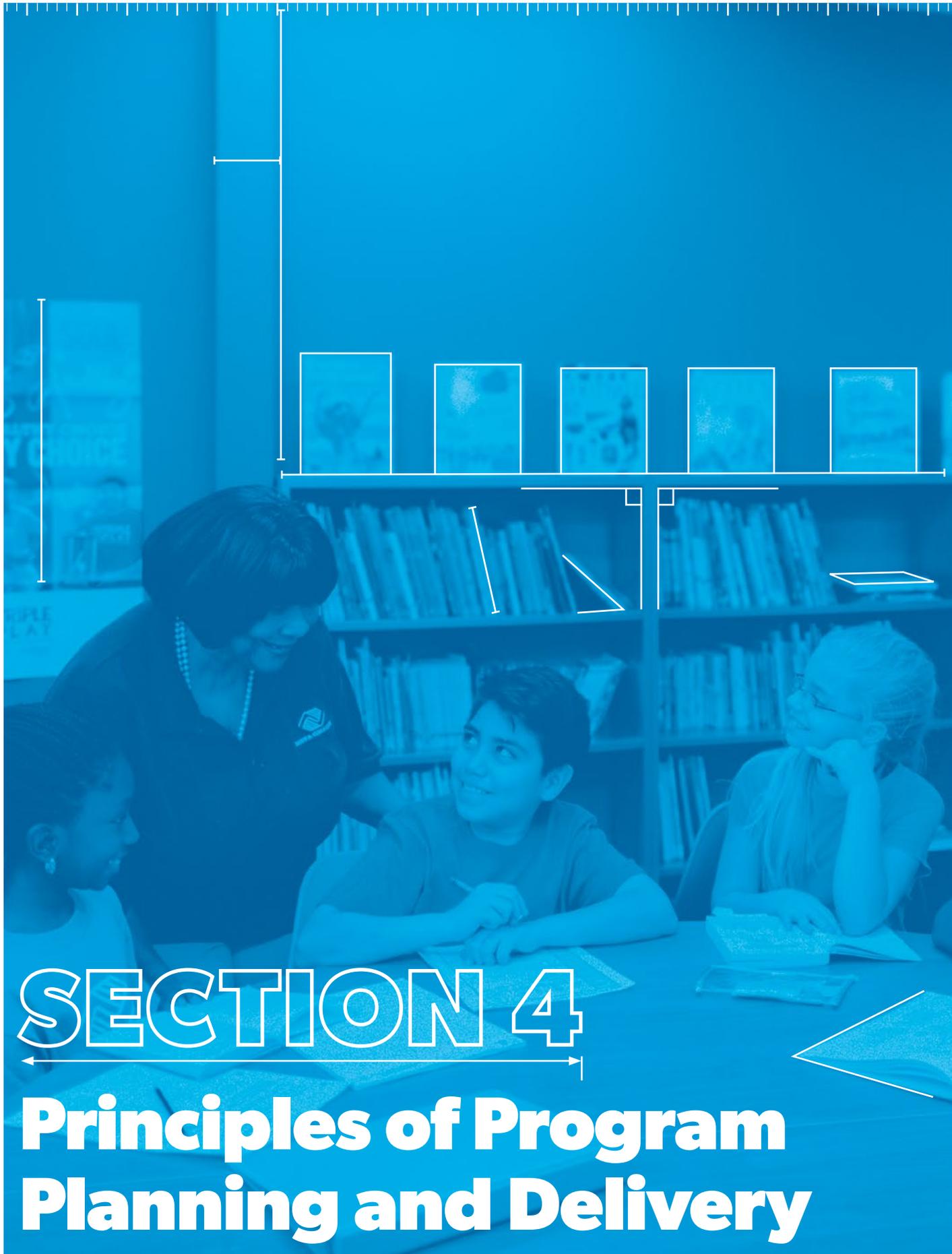
Middle/Late Childhood	Early Adolescence/Tween	Adolescence/Teen
Ages 6 to 9 and 10 to 12	Ages 10 to 12 and 13 to 15	Ages 13 to 15 and 16 to 18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boys and girls experience a steady growth in size, strength and coordination. Growth surges when surrounded by positive relationships, secure attachment and low stress. Motor development becomes more coordinated. Youth can play most organized games with simplified rules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is wide variation at the onset of puberty, with some youth maturing early and others maturing late. Girls begin puberty earlier than boys. Early-maturing girls are more likely to engage in negative health behaviors and are at higher risk for depression. Physical changes of puberty become outwardly apparent, and children are more aware of their changing bodies. Body image and eating problems can sometimes start at this age. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Puberty continues. Both boys and girls show outward physical signs of maturation. Towards the end of this period, physical changes level off. Most older teens experience strong sexual feelings.



	Middle/Late Childhood Ages 6 to 9 and 10 to 12	Early Adolescence/Tween Ages 10 to 12 and 13 to 15	Adolescence/Teen Ages 13 to 15 and 16 to 18
Cognitive Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are capable of learning a lot at young ages. This leads to advances in memory, attention, logic and creative thinking. • Children struggle with abstract thinking, as they can only draw from events they have previously experienced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth develop greater cognitive abilities for logic and reasoning. Youth gradually can think more abstractly, imagine future possibilities, and consider more complexity. • Changes in the brain make youth more sensitive to rewards (e.g., money, food, peer approval) and exciting and emotionally charged experiences. These changes lead youth to engage in what adults would consider risky behaviors. These risk-taking behaviors can increase when among peers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most teens can think abstractly and hypothetically, discern underlying premise of situations, and think about the future. Thinking and reasoning are comparable to adults'. • The parts of the brain responsible for self-control and decision-making have further developed and are still developing. Teens may not be fully able to connect actions with consequences. • Older teens develop increased capacity to understand multiple perspectives, leading to the ability to grasp bigger societal issues.
Emotional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are more self-conscious and worried about what others think of them. • Children develop better emotional awareness. However, emotional outbursts are still normal occurrences. • Children increasingly use strategies to control their emotions, such as calming themselves when angry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parts of the brain responsible for emotional response develop quicker than those required for self-control, leading to strong emotional responses and moodiness. • Youth become more self-conscious and worried about what others think about them. This leads to thinking they are unique and people don't understand their experiences. • Youth often mask negative or uncomfortable emotions with neutral responses. • Boys struggle with expressing their emotions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teens gradually become more emotionally stable as they start to gain more coping and emotion regulation skills. • Youth start to become aware of their unique personalities and opinions. • Reflection becomes an important tool as youth become able to examine their experiences.



	Middle/Late Childhood Ages 6 to 9 and 10 to 12	Early Adolescence/Tween Ages 10 to 12 and 13 to 15	Adolescence/Teen Ages 13 to 15 and 16 to 18
Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having positive relationships with peers is especially important. Children increasingly want to be liked and accepted by friends. Healthy friendships promote positive development. • Gender stereotyping increases, with boys being more rigid in their beliefs about gender roles than girls. • Children start to engage in prosocial behaviors in more complex ways, such as reassuring their peers and helping others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peers' attention and approval is very important. Young people feel intense peer pressure and may develop "best friends" or form cliques. • It becomes emotionally important for children to have and keep friends. • Youth interact and develop friendships with members of the opposite sex. They become interested in romance and dating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendships with peers remain important, but older teens are less influenced by peer pressure. They begin to define themselves on their own terms. • One-to-one relationships are becoming increasingly important, as friendships become based on intimacy and trust rather than common interest and activities. Friendships with members of the opposite sex become common. • Teens are increasingly able to view parents as individuals with their own perspectives. • Boys may lose positive male friendships due to pressure to conform to gender and cultural expectations.
Self Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children become interested in how things work. • Children are mostly interested in the present, with very limited thought towards the future. • Self-esteem varies as children discover their qualities and compare themselves to others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem issues may develop. Early developing boys often have higher social status/self-esteem. Early maturing girls may struggle with newfound attention. • Youth seek independence and test authority as they push for autonomy. However, they need guidance and structure as they navigate new boundaries. • Youth experiment with different identities, but identities are closely tied to peer groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity formation takes center stage. Youth may experiment with different styles, sexuality, friendships and occupations. • Teens' autonomy increases as they start to inhabit leadership roles and take on more responsibility in different areas of their lives. • Teens' interests become important gateways into passions and purpose.



SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



PURPOSE/AUDIENCE

For new **youth development professionals**, this section describes the basic building blocks of programming. It walks **site-level program directors** and **site directors** through enhancing program quality at their site. Then it shows how to bind everything together in careful daily session and program planning.

Section Summary:

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery

You accomplish your core youth development work through the programs and activities you implement. When you engage youth more frequently and deeply using high-quality youth development practices and effective programs, you boost your ability to have a positive, lasting impact on their lives.

Building Blocks of Programming

Overall Program: The overall program encompasses all of the activities, programs and services offered at your Club or Youth Center. This includes both structured time, such as programs and assemblies, and less-structured time, such as transitions and snack or meal times.

Core Program Areas: This refers to a grouping of programs designed to achieve specific youth outcomes related to a common discipline. They fit into and align with the Formula for Impact's priority outcome areas of Academic Success, Good Character and Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles. The five Core Program Areas are:

- Leadership and Service
- Education
- The Arts
- Health and Wellness
- Sports and Recreation

Targeted Programs: A component of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience, Targeted Programs are intentionally designed and chosen to help Club youth achieve positive outcomes in one of our three priority outcome areas. Targeted Programs:

- Are planned
- Are designed to achieve stated goals and objectives
- Are designed to build upon existing knowledge and skills
- Are conducted for a specific audience
- Are conducted over a specific period of time, using multiple lessons in a certain order
- Use specific delivery methods
- Measure and evaluate the extent to which participants achieve goals and objectives

High-Yield Activities: This component of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience provides youth with enjoyable experiences that are hands-on and interactive, that intentionally develop critical thinking or other skills, and help them achieve positive outcomes in our three priority outcome areas.

Session: Typically, a Club or Youth Center program schedule is made up of standard blocks of time in particular spaces. All activities that occur in a space during one of those blocks of time is a session. A session may be dedicated to a High-Yield Activity or a Targeted Program. Planning time is essential to successfully facilitate Targeted Program sessions and High-Yield Activities.

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



Elements of a High-Quality Session: To ensure you implement high-quality youth development practices consistently, use the following elements to structure your Targeted Program sessions or High-Yield Activities:

- Warm Welcome
- Community Builder
- Group Agreements
- Main Activity
- Reflection
- Recognition
- Closing and Transition

Special Events: These important building blocks of a good overall program boost fun, excitement and interest – for youth, staff, volunteers, families and community partners. Examples include events that culminate theme- or project-driven programming, youth performances, holiday dinners, family nights and field trips.

Key Factors for Enhancing Program Quality

Interest-Based and Needs-Based Programming: It's important to offer youth a balanced mix of interest-based and needs-based programs and activities. Keep this in mind when you plan the schedule for your assigned program area or age group, and when you get together with your team to plan your Club or Youth Center's overall program schedule. Needs-based programs address the needs of the youth you serve in the context of their community. Interest-based programs tap into the interests and passions of youth.

Free Choice (Voluntary) Versus Fixed (Mandatory) Program Schedules: A key factor for program quality has to do with how your Club or Youth Center structures its program schedule, and to what degree youth are able to make choices about what they participate in and when. A good schedule meets the needs and interests of both youth and staff.

Some sites allow members to freely select the programs and activities they will participate in, so they can exercise autonomy. This is a free choice or voluntary program schedule. In other sites, young people's choice of programming is limited based on their age, programmatic philosophy or other reasons. This is a fixed or mandatory program schedule. Some sites offer a mixture of these two types.

Staff-to-Youth Ratios: Another key factor for program quality is how your Club or Youth Center allocates and deploys staff in relation to the number of youth being served. An adequate number of staff is crucial to ensure young people are properly supervised, kept safe, and have the opportunity to form healthy relationships with staff and other youth. A staff-to-youth ratio refers to the number of youth in a program compared to the number of adult supervising staff members.²⁶ For example, 1:10 means that for every 10 youth, there is one staff member.

Check with your supervisor to make sure you're following your organization's policies and procedures. It's critical to maintain the proper ratio at all times, and to maintain accountability for all of the youth in your care.

NOTES:

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



NOTES:

Types of Interactions With Youth: Use different types of interactions or delivery methods in your programs and activities to engage youth more deeply and help them build knowledge and skills. Each day, young people should have opportunities to interact with staff, volunteers and other youth individually, in small groups and large groups.

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI): CQI is a way of thinking and learning. It's a cyclical, ongoing process with three phases. Each day, take small steps to practice personal CQI.

- **Assess:** Think about the effectiveness of your sessions with youth. Did you use good youth development practices today? Did the kids have fun and learn what they were supposed to learn?
- **Plan:** Make sure you're prepared for your sessions. Make adjustments based on what you learned. What will you try or do differently?
- **Improve:** Implement your planning and improvement strategies.

Planning Your Own Programs and Activities

Planning is an important feature in implementing effective, engaging Targeted Programs and High-Yield Activities. Your careful planning:

- Lends structure and context for young people's learning experience
- Keeps you organized, well-versed in the content, and able to manage time effectively
- Helps you consistently incorporate high-quality youth development practices by using the Elements of a High-Quality Session

When you start with a good plan, you can more objectively reflect on what went well with your program or activity, what challenges you had, and how well youth achieved the expected outcomes. ■

SECTION

4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



In the first section of the Program Basics BLUEprint, you learned about our Formula for Impact theory of change. It states that if we provide the young people who need us most with the best possible Outcome-Driven Club Experience, we will enable them to achieve Academic Success, demonstrate Good Character and Citizenship, and live Healthy Lifestyles.

You also learned that certain components are necessary to create the Outcome-Driven Club Experience:

1. Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development
2. High-Yield Activities
3. Targeted Programs
4. Regular Attendance

If we use the analogy of constructing a Club building to describe your work, the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development form your building's foundation. Targeted Programs and High-Yield Activities are built on that youth development foundation. In other words, you accomplish your core youth development work through the programs and activities you implement. When you engage youth more frequently and deeply – by using high-quality youth development practices and effective programs – you boost your ability to have a positive, lasting impact on their lives.

Building Blocks of Programming

In order to achieve high program quality, it's critical for Club and Youth Center professionals to understand the basic principles for planning and implementing effective programs. Think of these principles as the building blocks of strong Club or Youth Center programming.

Let's dig in by considering some basic vocabulary.

What Is a Program?

In Clubs and Youth Centers, you may hear the term “program” used in different ways. Let's quickly get clear on these different uses.

- **Overall program:** When you hear this phrase, think of everything your Club or Youth Center provides young people. This encompasses the entire range of activities, programs and services, including transition times, available throughout the day. Some people also refer to this as Club or Youth Center programming.
- **Core Program Area:** This phrase refers to a grouping of programs designed to achieve specific youth outcomes related to a common discipline. They fit into and align with the Formula for Impact's three priority outcome areas of Academic Success, Good Character and Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles. Clubs and Youth Centers organize their work around five Core Program Areas:
 - Leadership and Service
 - Education
 - The Arts
 - Health and Wellness
 - Sports and Recreation

NOTES:

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



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- **Program:** Clubs and Youth Centers use individual programs as the main method to help build and reinforce young people’s knowledge and skills. Programs have specific goals and objectives, follow a sequence of sessions or lessons, and are conducted over a specific period of time. A typical program session uses varied delivery methods and multiple activities that build off of each other. You might also hear some people refer to a program as a curriculum.

Now let’s delve into each of these in more detail, and look at how you can apply these concepts in your day-to-day work.

The Overall Club Program

The overall Club program encompasses all of the activities, programs and services offered throughout the day at your Club or Youth Center. This includes both structured time, such as programs and assemblies, and less-structured time, such as transitions and snack or meal times.

Think of the day as a theatrical performance. For the opening act, you greet youth warmly and help them feel safe, supported and welcome. Next come a series of main acts (programs and meetings), in which you work side-by-side with staff and youth. In each act, youth build knowledge and skills as they play, create, experiment and interact with each other, staff, and the materials and equipment in the space. Just like in a play, there are transitions between each act. These transitions can be the time spent moving from program to program, loading the field trip van or bus, or having a snack or meal. In the closing act, you reconnect kids with their families and prep for another performance on the following day.

Most programming occurs in structured time. During this time, you facilitate programs that build knowledge and skills. You also promote positive attitudes and behaviors in youth related to our priority outcome areas.

In reality, arrivals from school, checking in and out, meals and snacks, free time or free play, and transitions between programs take up a good chunk of time. You can use Community Builder activities during these less-structured times of day. When you and your teammates build the overall schedule, make sure you take into account and plan for all Club or Youth Center time.

If your Club has a varied drop-off schedule, due to transportation or school dismissal times, the start of your day may consist of a less-structured session. Have a clear plan with meaningful choices for members during these times. Youth and teens are coming out of the highly structured school day and entering a new environment. This transition is an important time to let youth engage in choice-based activities. Review the sample week in the gamesroom during a less-structured rolling arrival time below.

Gamesroom				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Billiards, Checkers and Four Square	Family Feud and Cup Stacking	Magic the Gathering, Puzzles and Foosball	Expression Wall, People Tracing and Four Square	Free Choice Gamesroom

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



In this sample, each day includes multiple choices within the space, but only Friday is a free choice day. Free choice intentionally built into the schedule is a fun way for youth to be creative, try new things, and practice the skills they have been working on developing. It's important to put boundaries around free choice time so it doesn't become the only activity offered in any area. Here are some tips.

- Contain free choice time to a scheduled session.
- Limit free choice time in the week.
- Don't offer free choice time in all areas of the Club at the same time, so youth who prefer more structure have a safe place to engage.

Below you can see a more highly structured version of the gamesroom during a later programming time, once all members have arrived at the Club. You will notice there may be only one option during this session. There are activities that overlap in the less-structured and more highly structured times, such as Cup Stacking and Four Square. During the structured times, those activities are formatted in a tournament style, group challenge, or with a specific skill being demonstrated and taught. In contrast, during the less-structured times, youth can practice and choose to move on to something else when they are done.

Gamesroom				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Cup Stacking Tournament	Spider Web	Fabulous Flags: Character Version	Four Square Tourney/Magic the Gathering	State Gamesroom Tournament Practice Ages 6 to 10

Core Program Areas

Youth have a wide variety of interests and needs. You'll attract and retain more kids and teens if you offer a mix of programs that tap into what they want and need. The updated five Core Program Areas categorize different programs into disciplines by the specific outcomes they're designed to help youth achieve. The Core Program Areas fit into and align with the priority outcome areas of the Formula for Impact. They were defined based on a careful review of the relevant, current professional literature on what youth need to be successful in the 21st century.

The updated Core Program Areas are:

- Leadership and Service
- Education
- The Arts
- Health and Wellness
- Sports and Recreation

Note that Youth Centers should consult the leadership of their particular service to confirm which of the Core Program Areas are mandatory for them to implement.

As you learned in The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs section of this BLUEprint, Clubs and Youth Centers provide youth with role models and experiences that help them develop into persons who demonstrate six essential character traits: caring, citizenship, fairness, respect, responsibility and trustworthiness. You also learned that character development doesn't just

NOTES:

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



NOTES:

happen by happy accident, or through a single program, small-group leadership clubs or a Core Program Area. Rather, the overall Club or Youth Center program presents many daily opportunities for staff and volunteers to model good character for youth, and for young people to practice good character. Lastly, you learned that to be intentional about developing good character in young people, all of your programs and activities should offer youth lots of chances to practice social-emotional skills. These are skills related to:

- How youth feel about themselves
- Their relationships with others
- Their ability to regulate emotions
- Their ability to solve problems

As we discussed, character development programming is a part of every Core Program Area. To make sure youth have ample time to practice these skills, build character development opportunities into every area of the schedule each week. Review the Reference Handout: Integrating Character Development Throughout the Club Day at the end of this section to see how you might put this into practice in your Club or Youth Center.

Integrating Workforce Readiness Across the Core Program Areas

Previously, BGCA's work-ready programs targeted Club teens only, starting at ages where youth are preparing for first jobs and postsecondary pathways. BGCA's updated approach focuses on youth as young as age 6. This is an effort to develop the social-emotional skills or "soft skills" youth and teens need to succeed in school and the workplace during a critical time in their cognitive development. Clubs and Youth Centers should implement programs and activities that build young people's social-emotional skills and allow them to explore careers across all Core Program Areas and all age groups.

The ability to work in teams, solve problems and communicate effectively are just a few of the social-emotional skills essential for success in the workplace. According to a 2017 survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, more than 80 percent of employers stated they look for employees who demonstrate strong teamwork, problem-solving and communication skills.¹⁶ These foundational skills are not only in high demand with employers, but they're also transferable across occupations and industries. Building social-emotional skills through informal and formal learning experiences helps maximize the time youth spend on more technical skill development and practice.

Career exploration refers to activities that motivate and inspire youth to think about the connection between their postsecondary plans and careers.¹⁷ Clubs and Youth Centers should offer two levels of career exploration.

1. For youth ages 6 to 18, offer opportunities to explore careers throughout all Core Program Areas. This early access to careers exposes youth to the breadth of opportunity and helps them define their own work and education aspirations.

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



2. For teens, offer opportunities for career mentoring and coaching, job shadowing, resume building, job interviewing, etc. These support discovery of and exposure to careers and learning about the pathways to attain various positions. Such activities help youth understand the expectations of and skills required for specific occupations, so they can plan for their continuing education or training.

The following passage describes each Core Program Area, aligns it to one of the priority outcome areas, and lists skills it helps develop to support young people's readiness in school, life and the workforce.

Leadership and Service

Leadership and Service programs build leadership with self, leadership with others, and leadership within the community. They give youth the confidence and abilities to create meaningful change in their world. Targeted Programs and High-Yield Activities in the Leadership and Service Core Program Area are linked to the Good Character and Citizenship priority outcome area.

The Leadership and Service Core Program Area develops the following key skills:

- Self-awareness and advocacy
- Collaboration with peers and adults
- Goal-setting
- Identifying and solving problems
- Social and civic responsibility

Education

Education programs complement and reinforce what youth learn during the school day, while creating experiences that invite them to fall in love with learning. Rooted in social-emotional development practices, programs in this area enable all youth to be effective, engaged learners who are on track to graduate with a plan for the future. As an informal learning space, Clubs have an opportunity to offer both remediation and enrichment, all while inviting youth to discover and pursue their passions through experiential learning. Targeted Programs and High-Yield Activities in this area are linked to the Academic Success priority outcome area.

At all developmental stages, education programs prompt youth to plan and prepare for the future. This includes observing and practicing the social-emotional “soft skills” that ladder up to employability, exploring career options, and engaging in programmatic experiences that prepare youth to learn and work beyond high school. Programs and experiences supporting employability encourage youth to *explore* career options and the postsecondary pathways to their chosen career, *develop* skills necessary for success in postsecondary education and the workforce, and *apply* their skills through real-world experiences.

Youth development practices that support teaching and learning are core to the quality of education programs. Effective education programs, when facilitated with high-quality youth development practices, help youth develop the attitudes, behaviors and skills needed to become effective, engaged learners who are on track to graduate with a plan for the future.

NOTES:

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



NOTES:

The Education Core Program Area develops the following key skills for Academic Success:

- Identify and solve problems
- Plan and carry out investigations
- Analyze and interpret information
- Communicate
- Collaborate
- Persevere as a learner

The Education Core Program Area also develops the following key skills for post-secondary readiness:

- Goal-setting
- Career awareness
- Post-secondary awareness
- Self-efficacy
- Perseverance

The Arts

The Arts (digital, fine, applied and performing arts) programs encourage imagination and self-expression. They also help youth develop knowledge and understanding of specific art forms. Art programs build social-emotional and 21st century skills, such as communication, critical thinking and creativity. Targeted Programs and High-Yield Activities in the Arts Core Program Area are linked to the Academic Success priority outcome area.

The Arts Core Program Area develops the following key skills:

- Technical art knowledge
- Communicating
- Art awareness
- Cultural awareness
- Critique and feedback

Health and Wellness

Health and Wellness programs focus on building the physical, social and emotional wellness of youth. These programs provide opportunities to build the foundational skills of developing relationships, regulating emotions and solving problems. These programs also focus on building health promotion skills, such as communication and decision making, through exploring a range of health topics and behaviors, including substance use, sexual behavior and violence. Targeted Programs and High-Yield Activities in the Health and Wellness Core Program Area are linked to the Healthy Lifestyles priority outcome area.

The Health and Wellness Core Program Area develops the following key skills:

- Self-efficacy
- Identifying emotions
- Identifying and solving problems
- Resistance skills
- Health communication

Sports and Recreation

Sports and Recreation programs promote physical health by providing low-risk settings for members to explore moving their bodies and eating healthy foods. These playful experiences build movement skills, such as running and throwing, and nutrition skills, such as choosing healthy foods. Members develop positive attitudes toward physical activity and healthy eating to support a lifetime of healthy decisions. Targeted Programs and High-Yield

SECTION

4

Principles of Program
Planning and Delivery



Activities in the Sports and Recreation Core Program Area are linked to the Healthy Lifestyles priority outcome area.

The Sports and Recreation Core Program Area develops the following key skills:

Physical Activity

- Perseverance
- Confidence
- Physical fitness
- Locomotor
- Acrobatic

Nutrition

- Impulse control
- Stress management
- Identifying emotions
- Identifying and solving problems
- Choosing healthy foods

Targeted Programs

Now that we've seen how the five Core Program Areas fit into our Formula for Impact, and how Clubs and Youth Centers can use them to organize their programming, let's learn more about individual programs.

The Formula for Impact defines a particular type of program as a crucial component of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience. **Targeted Programs** are intentionally designed and chosen to help Club youth achieve positive outcomes in one of our three priority outcome areas: Academic Success, Good Character and Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles.

In order to be effective, Targeted Programs:

- Are planned
- Are designed to achieve stated goals and objectives in a Core Program Area
- Are designed to build upon existing knowledge and skills
- Are conducted for a specific audience
- Are sequenced, meaning they are conducted over a specific period of time using multiple lessons in a certain order
- Use specific delivery methods
- Measure and evaluate the extent participants achieve goals and objectives

Targeted Programs reinforce and celebrate continual learning while setting our youth up for success.

Most of BGCA's national programs are Targeted Programs, because they're designed to help youth achieve positive outcomes in our priority outcome areas, and they meet the above criteria. For example, the SMART Girls program is a sequential series of lessons designed to build self-esteem and life skills in girls. The program contains three sets of 10 sessions for girls ages 8 to 10, 11 to 13, and 14 to 18. It uses different types of small-group and large-group activities. Activities emphasize discussion and reflection, which allow staff to determine whether girls are gaining knowledge and building skills.

To better meet the particular needs and interests of the young people they serve, Clubs should develop and implement their own Targeted Programs, supplementing those with programs from BGCA or other sources. Many of your Club's programs probably already fit the model, or could do so if you modify them to meet the criteria.

NOTES:

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



NOTES:

High-Yield Activities

Think of activities as the smallest building blocks of Club programming. Activities are a single event of limited duration. All activities have some kind of objective, even if it's simply about engaging youth in play or keeping them safely occupied during a lull in the programming. Examples of simple activities include watching a movie, playing a game like Simon Says, or painting a picture.

In our Formula for Impact, an additional type of activity serves as another crucial component of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience: High-Yield Activities. These provide youth with enjoyable experiences that are hands-on, interactive, intentionally develop critical thinking or other skills, and help them achieve positive outcomes in our three priority outcome areas.

High-Yield Activities appeal to young people's interests and their desire to play, and can even include some friendly competition. They can be done with individuals, small groups and large groups. When done well, they remove the division between learning and playing. Most importantly, they should be fun. They should motivate youth to explore, develop, create and learn. High-Yield Activities are most fun when they are varied and have an element of surprise.

High-Yield Activities help inject spontaneity and excitement into the day-to-day routine. You can increase existing programs' appeal by using related High-Yield Activities as extensions or enhancements. You can even create High-Yield Activities that support more than one of the priority outcome areas at the same time.

Here's an example. Club staff know that teens like playing soccer video games. To make that activity a High-Yield Activity, they turned it into a World Cup-style tournament, with individual teens representing different countries across the world. After every game, staff helped teens compile and analyze their performance statistics based on what happened in the game, and they determined their current standing in the tournament rankings. Staff tapped into an activity teens already enjoyed and found a creative way to incorporate some math (sports statistics) and social studies (picking different countries and players).

Keep a balance of high- and low-energy options. A low-energy option is painting a picture about how Club members are feeling. This combines arts and social-emotional skills. Another example is building a bridge that can support a certain amount of weight. This combines STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) with fine motor skill development.

SECTION

4

Principles of Program
Planning and Delivery



Elements of a High-Quality Session

Typically, a Club or Youth Center program schedule is made up of standard blocks of time in particular spaces. All the activities that occur in a space during one of those blocks of time is a session (often called a lesson).

A session may be dedicated to a High-Yield Activity or a Targeted Program. For example, a session of the Money Matters financial literacy program might include an icebreaker, an activity about budgeting, a high-yield online game where teens test their ability to stay within a certain budget, and a group discussion to help teens reflect on what they learned.

Planning time is essential to successfully facilitate Targeted Program sessions and High-Yield Activities. Planning includes scheduling a time and place, securing and setting up the needed materials or equipment, promoting the session, becoming familiar with the content and facilitation steps, and identifying strategies for keeping youth engaged.

Remember to infuse the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development into every Targeted Program session or High-Yield Activity. Youth thrive when we implement high-quality youth development practices consistently.¹⁸ When you incorporate these practices during programming, you enhance program quality and help youth achieve the program's desired outcomes.¹⁹

Use the following Elements of a High-Quality Session to structure your Targeted Program sessions or High-Yield Activities. These elements align with the David P. Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment.

- Warm Welcome
- Main Activity
- Closing and Transition
- Community Builder
- Reflection
- Group Agreements
- Recognition

The content below describes each of the Elements of a High-Quality Session and offers practical tips for adapting them to be more developmentally appropriate for different age groups.

Warm Welcome: A welcoming environment is associated with positive behaviors, social and emotional development, and academic outcomes.²⁰

It's important to greet youth by name and thank them for coming as they enter the session. This helps build a safe, positive environment; a sense of belonging; and supportive relationships with peers and adults.

- Middle/Late Childhood (ages 6 to 9 and 10 to 12): This is a good opportunity to check in and see how youth are feeling. Use this to gauge their moods and whether they might need some extra support in regulating their emotions.
- Early Adolescence/"Tweens" (ages 10 to 12 and 13 to 15): Youth at these ages might seem moody or unavailable. They are going through a lot of changes and transitions in their lives. The Warm Welcome communicates support and caring, and when done daily, provides structure.
- Adolescence/Teens (ages 13 to 15 and 16 to 18): Talk with teens about what's going on in their lives. Ask them about their day or their hobbies. These conversations, though brief, help in identity development.

NOTES:

RESOURCE

Looking for High-Yield Activity ideas? Log onto [BGCA.net](https://www.bgca.net) and do a search for:

- High-Yield Activities Kits (more than 20 available)
- Back Pocket Program Hints
- Back Pocket Program Hints, Too
- Back Pocket Program Hints for the Learning Center

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



NOTES:

Community Builder: These activities build trust and supportive relationships among youth and staff through play, fun and active engagement. They're about creating a climate in which participants feel they are part of the group. Some program materials already include Community Builder activities, while at other times you'll need to find or create your own. You can make these activities even more meaningful by looking for ways to tie them to the main content of your session.

- Middle/Late Childhood (ages 6 to 9 and 10 to 12): Community Builders should involve physical activity. This helps youth self-regulate and focus.
- Early Adolescence/"Tweens" (ages 10 to 12 and 13 to 15): Youth at these ages are closely connected to their friend groups. Use multiple grouping strategies (often called "groupers") to make sure they can connect with other peers.
- Adolescence/Teens (ages 13 to 15 and 16 to 18): Implement a variety of Community Builders that use large and small groups. This helps teens build relationships with others while also reinforcing their need for close, intimate friendships.

Group Agreements: This practice creates physical and emotional safety and provides developmentally appropriate structure with clear limits for behavior. During your first session or meeting, collaborate with youth to set and post group rules and expectations. In each subsequent session or meeting with your group, review the Agreements to reinforce positive values and youth commitments to one another. To develop Group Agreements with youth, we recommend you ask three basic questions:

1. How do you want to feel?
2. What will you do to feel this way?
3. When there is conflict, what will we do?

Depending on the ages and developmental characteristics of your group, however, you should adapt the questions or how you help youth respond to them.

- Middle/Late Childhood (ages 6 to 9 and 10 to 12): Compare Group Agreements to Club rules. Explain they are like promises you make to each other to ensure everyone feels safe and comfortable in a program. Youth in these age groups will likely need help thinking of feeling words and specific behaviors. If needed, use these as your guiding questions:
 - How do we want to feel during our time together?
 - What can we do to have these feelings every day?
 - What can we do if someone's feelings are hurt?
- Early Adolescence/"Tweens" (ages 10 to 12 and 13 to 15): Ask youth to reflect individually on how they want to feel while at the Club. Then have them work together to discuss what emotional safety means. Guide them if needed. They may also need your help coming up with specific behaviors for the second and third questions.
- Adolescence/Teens (ages 13 to 15 and 16 to 18): Have an authentic conversation about how teens are currently feeling, how they want to feel, and how they can work together to improve the way they all feel while at the Club. Ensure all teens participate and are heard.

RESOURCE

Find Community Builder and grouper ideas on the [YDToolbox mobile app](#).

SECTION

4

Principles of Program
Planning and Delivery



Main Activity: These are hands-on, interactive activities in which youth work together with materials to explore new concepts or practice a new skill. Of course the topic, theme or goal of Main Activities will differ based on the program. Review the content and facilitation instructions ahead of time, and think about how to tailor the Main Activity for your group. Support knowledge and skill building by telling youth what the activity will entail and how it will help them grow. Provide assistance when needed, and encourage them to keep trying. Try to include real choices for youth that influence the outcome of the activity.

- Middle/Late Childhood (ages 6 to 9 and 10 to 12): For young kids, activities need to be structured with simple directions. Children struggle to sit for long periods of time, so break up these periods with movement. This can be as simple as giving 15 seconds to get all the wiggles and jiggles out.
- Early Adolescence/"Tweens" (ages 10 to 12 and 13 to 15): Activities should be group- and peer-focused and can be more challenging. Provide opportunities for youth to make decisions and exert their independence. Provide structure, without taking control of their program and activity.
- Adolescence/Teens (ages 13 to 15 and 16 to 18): Activities should connect directly to teens' passions and future goals. Give teens a lot more independence and freedom. Your role is more of a partner and mentor than a teacher.

Reflection: Reflection helps youth connect what they've learned, and identify how they can apply it in other areas of their lives. Pose reflection questions and give youth time to write, draw, act out or discuss what they learned during the Main Activity. Ask them to share reflections with their peers within a small or large group.²¹

- Middle/Late Childhood (ages 6 to 9 and 10 to 12): At these ages, youth might struggle with understanding abstractions. Give concrete examples when possible. Let's say you are discussing teamwork after a sports game. You need to give specific examples of what good teamwork is – like when a player passes the ball to a teammate who has a better chance of making a shot. Let's say you are discussing the importance of optimism, a pretty abstract concept. Break it down by giving examples of what optimism looks or sounds like. You might use a phrase like, "I can do this!"
- Adolescence/Teens (ages 13 to 15 and 16 to 18): Give teens opportunities to showcase their learning and present to their peers.

Recognition: Provide opportunities to recognize, acknowledge and encourage youth. Highlighting specific positive behaviors encourages youth to continue behaving in ways that support their growth and development. It also gives them feedback on how they are progressing in certain skills. Your goal is to help young people develop healthy behaviors, attain a balanced sense of self and others, and feel successful.²² Plan formal and informal ways to recognize, acknowledge and encourage youth, and provide opportunities for them to recognize one another.

- Middle/Late Childhood (ages 6 to 9 and 10 to 12) and Early Adolescence/"Tweens" (ages 10 to 12 and 13 to 15): Use Recognition to build youths' self-esteem. Give positive, sincere praise that is specific. For example, do not just say, "Good job." Instead say, "Good job for all the effort you put into learning how to do a handstand."

NOTES:

RESOURCE

To learn more about building Group Agreements with youth, search for the Youth Positive Club Climate Toolkit on BGCA.net.

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



NOTES:

Closing and Transition: Ending a Targeted Program session or High-Yield Activity with warmth and clarity is as important as the Warm Welcome at the beginning. Engage the group in working together to put materials away and tidy up the space. Make clear what they can expect as they move on to the next program offering.

Special Events

Special events are also important building blocks of a good overall Club or Youth Center program. Special events boost fun, excitement and interest – not just for youth, but also for staff, volunteers, families and community partners. You can use special events to:

- Reward frequent attenders or long-term members
- Motivate youth to attend more often
- Attract and recruit new youth
- Strengthen bonds with and support families
- Build awareness of your Club or Youth Center in your community

Special events can be major Club-wide events or smaller events that take place in one Core Program Area. Examples include celebrations, recognition events, events that culminate theme- or project-driven programming, youth performances, holiday dinners, cultural festivals, family nights, field days, teen lock-ins and field trips. To spice up your programming, be sure to sprinkle in a variety of special events in your Club or Youth Center annual calendar. Work with your teammates and community partners to provide fun, memorable experiences for youth and their families.

Key Factors for Enhancing Program Quality

Now that you have a solid understanding of the basic building blocks of Club and Youth Center programming, let's look at some key factors for ensuring the quality of your programming.

Interest-Based and Needs-Based Programming

To enhance the quality of your programming, offer a balanced mix of interest-based and needs-based programs and activities for your youth. When you plan the schedule for your assigned program area or age group, keep this in mind when choosing the Targeted Programs and High-Yield Activities you will implement. The same applies when you and your teammates get together with your site director to plan your site's overall program schedule.

Needs-based programs address the needs of the youth you serve in the context of their community. For example, if you find youth in your community are struggling with issues around growing up, consider implementing programs like SMART Girls or Passport to Manhood. These programs teach girls and boys skills for navigating the rocky transition from adolescence into young adulthood.

SECTION

4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



Team up with your Club or Youth Center colleagues to research and identify the needs of youth in your community. Here are a few strategies you can try.

- Talk with youth, both those who are already involved in your Club or Youth Center and those who aren't.
- Collect input from parents and caregivers through a survey or at a family night event.
- Gather feedback from school or other community partners.
- Obtain data on local youth trends or factors in your community affecting young people's well-being. Examples to look for include local high school graduation rates; teen employment rates; juvenile arrest, delinquency or gang involvement statistics; and health-risk behavior rates.

Interest-based programs tap into young people's interests, passions and enthusiasm. If you find youth are passionate about basketball, consider starting a basketball league. If they want to learn how to cipher, implement BGCA's Lyricism 101 program.

To identify young people's interests, you and your teammates should go straight to the source!

- Ask the youth you're serving about their interests and what they'd like to do at the Club or Youth Center. Use surveys, quick polls, and your daily conversations with them to get a good read on their wants and interests.
- Also reach out to youth in the community who don't currently come to the Club or Youth Center. This is an important strategy for recruiting new youth into your programming.

To offer exciting, relevant programs that will engage youth, find the best mix of interest-based and needs-based Targeted Programs and High-Yield Activities for the youth you serve. Often programs can meet the needs and interests of youth at the same time. You can also add High-Yield Activities to needs-based programs to hook youth via their interests and passions to reinforce learning. A common example of this is sports programs. Youth may be interested in sports, but of course they also need to exercise regularly and be physically fit. To be most effective, you'd want to offer programs featuring young people's favorite sports.

In the sample Teen Center schedule below, you can see a good balance between interest-based and needs-based programming. Each session offers at least two activities. But how were they selected?

Imagine that during the planning process for the seasonal program schedule, teens expressed an interest in spoken word poetry, social media, crafts, social games and building experiences to put on a resume. This led to implementing Pinterest activities, Lyricism 101, card games and service projects. And from the results of a parent survey, staff learned that teens are experiencing higher levels of stress about money, and they are starting to apply for their first jobs. Further, several alumni have visited and expressed they are struggling with cooking for themselves and maintaining their cars. This led teen staff to schedule Career Launch, Yoga/Mindfulness, Money Matters and Life Skills (i.e., cooking, changing a tire). Staff also take time to work with each teen to create a seasonal program schedule engagement plan, so they can practice balancing their own needs and interests.

NOTES:

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



NOTES:

Teen Center				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Career Launch Program/ Pinterest Activity	Lyricism 101 Program/Yoga-Mindfulness Activity	Money Matters/Card Games	Tutoring/Video Games/ Hang Out	Life Skills Activity/Service Project

Free Choice (Voluntary) Versus Fixed (Mandatory) Program Schedules

Another key factor for enhancing the quality of your programming involves how your Club or Youth Center structures its program schedule, and to what degree youth are able to make choices about what they participate in and when.

Clubs and Youth Centers vary widely on how much choice youth have when selecting programs and activities. Some Clubs allow members to freely select the programs and activities they will participate in. We refer to this as a free choice or voluntary program schedule. A free choice program schedule empowers youth to exercise autonomy and independence, something we value highly from a youth development point of view. Too much freedom, however, can limit skill development, as some youth might avoid trying new experiences or participating in programs they need, such as Power Hour homework help. Younger members may also feel overwhelmed or confused by the variety of choices.

In other Clubs or Youth Centers, young people’s choice of programming is limited based on their age, programmatic philosophy or other constraints. For example, all members between ages 6 and 9 need to complete their homework before engaging in other activities, dinner is always served at a particular time, or participating in a certain program is required to meet grant funding requirements. We call these fixed or mandatory program schedules. These force youth to participate in new experiences or programs they need. They can also save staff time and effort on program promotion. Staff may find it easier to implement these programs because they can be tailored for different age groups. Too much forced participation, however, can undermine young people’s enjoyment and motivation to participate, and it doesn’t encourage their autonomy and independence.

Some Clubs offer a mixture of these two program schedule types, having free choice for some programs or during a certain block of time, while making other programs mandatory. For example, for the first hour after snack, all youth participate in Power Hour in their age groups throughout the Club. Then afterwards, youth can choose from among all the programs and activities offered that day.

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



There is no one right way to structure the program schedule at your Club or Youth Center. A good program schedule meets the needs and interests of both youth and staff. Regularly ask Club members for input when building or changing your program schedule. Share kids' feedback and your own suggestions about program schedules with your teammates and supervisor.

Let's look at the sample program schedule below. During the time youth are arriving at the Club, the Learning Alcove hosts a free choice/voluntary session. Note: It's closed on Friday so the computer lab can be open for younger kids.

Learning Alcove 2:30–3:45 p.m.				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Quiet Reading/ Tutoring	Quiet Reading/ Tutoring	Quiet Reading/ Tutoring	Quiet Reading/ Tutoring	Closed

Starting at 3:45 p.m., once the majority of youth have arrived at the Club, the Learning Alcove moves to a fixed/mandatory schedule. At that time, all youth are in homeroom, doing homework and building community. This is followed by the Club meeting, which is also a fixed/mandatory session with a high level of structure.

Learning Alcove 3:45–4:45 p.m.				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom

At 5 p.m., the Learning Alcove switches back to free choice programming, but with a high level of structure. Some of the choices during this session are offered in advance, and others are made that day in the Club meeting. Since Ultimate Journey and Sparks Leadership are Targeted Programs that follow a sequence, members sign up for those in advance and complete the full 10-week program. Trivia and Ready Set Action are free choice sessions that youth can choose to join at the Club meeting. All of these are considered free choice options, as youth choose whether to attend, but the choices are selected at different times.

Learning Alcove 5–6 p.m.				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Trivia Activity	Ultimate Journey Program Ages 10+	Ready Set Action Program	Ultimate Journey Program Ages 6 to 9	Sparks Leadership Program

NOTES:

SECTION 4



NOTES:

Recommended Staff-to-Youth Ratios

Another critical consideration for enhancing the quality of your Outcome-Driven Club Experience has to do with how your Club or Youth Center allocates and deploys staff in relation to the number of youth being served.

Research shows that having an adequate number of staff is a mark of high program quality, for a number of sound reasons. Chief among these is to ensure young people are properly supervised, kept safe, and have the opportunity to form healthy relationships with staff and other youth.²³ Youth need to feel both physically and emotionally safe during Club and Youth Center programming. They need to be able to find an adult to help them when needed. They need to regularly receive individual attention from staff and have positive interactions with them.²⁴ Therefore, good staff-to-youth ratios matter greatly for high-quality youth development. They also matter for the morale and job satisfaction of staff.²⁵

A staff-to-youth ratio refers to the number of youth in a program compared to the number of adult supervising staff members.²⁶ For example, 1:10 means that for every 10 youth, there is one staff member. In their standards for quality out-of-school-time programs, both the National Afterschool Association and the Council on Accreditation have set the same standards for staff-to-youth ratios. They offer guidelines for two groups of youth: those including children younger than age 6 and those with youth older than age 6.²⁷

Based on research and these standards, BGCA makes the following recommendation for a general staff-to-youth ratio.

- Staff-to-youth ratios should not exceed 1:25 for any type of activity. Use such ratios only for large-group games or less-structured time, such as when Club members are engaged in free play in the gym or on the playground.

Below are additional considerations for staff-to-youth ratios based on the type of activity or the type of group you are working with.

- For groups of youth age 6 and older, consider a staff-to-youth ratio between 1:10 and 1:15.
- For youth groups that include children younger than age 6, consider a staff-to-youth ratio between 1:8 and 1:12.
- For small-group clubs, such as Keystone Club or Torch Club, consider a staff-to-youth ratio between 1:8 and 1:12.
- For field trips, the staff-to-youth ratio should be 1:8, with at least two adults per group; one of whom is a staff member.
- For swimming in a pool, use a staff-to-youth ratio of no more than 1:15. A certified lifeguard should be on-site in addition to the supervising staff. With a certified lifeguard and more than one supervising staff member, there may be up to 25 youth in the pool.²⁸ If swimming in a natural body of water, the number of supervising staff should be increased, and youth should only swim in designated areas.

SECTION

4

Principles of Program
Planning and Delivery



Staff-to-youth ratios may need to be adjusted depending on the type of activity and the age or abilities of Club members in the program, such as:

- Use a smaller staff-to-youth ratio when youth are working with potentially dangerous equipment, such as equipment used for welding or masonry, during field trips, or for swimming activities in which participants have little or no swimming proficiency. This allows you to better maintain supervision.
- Consider using smaller staff-to-youth ratios when working with youth with special needs. This allows more personal attention. Consult your Club's policy on working with children with special needs to ensure reasonable accommodations are made.

We recommend small group sizes to ensure staff members can support a physically and emotionally safe program space for all youth. A small-group environment helps ensure youth adhere to behavioral expectations and Group Agreements. It allows you to develop supportive relationships with individual youth and dedicate more attention to each one.

It's critical to maintain the proper ratio at all times with adult supervising staff. If a staff member temporarily leaves the room, make sure someone covers their spot until they return. For extra support and assistance during your programming, you can use adult or teen volunteers or Junior Staff, but they cannot be counted in your staff-to-youth ratio as supervising staff, nor should they be left alone to supervise.

Here are some tips for maintaining accountability for youth at all times.²⁹

- Always know how many youth are in your group. You should be able to state how many young people are in your care at all times.
- Know the individual youth in your group by face and name, and regularly do head counts. Count them at various times during your session, at every transition, whenever leaving one area and going to another, and at regular times throughout the day.
- Use a roster to record when children arrive and depart from your program or space. Record the total attendance for each block of time in the program schedule.
- Inform your supervisor immediately if you go over the ratio. Also inform your supervisor if you have more adults than are necessary. Those adults may be needed elsewhere, or your supervisor may need to reconsider staffing schedules for maximum efficiency.
- Understand and use your site's system for knowing where youth are at all times. For example, some Clubs or Youth Centers use walkie-talkies to notify other supervising staff when youth are moving between rooms or programs. Others station supervising staff in places where they can observe all entrances, exits, hallways and monitor young people's bathroom use.

Remember that these are guidelines. Your Club or organization may already have specific regulations in place. If you work in a BGCA-affiliated Youth Center on a U.S. military installation, you must adhere to the ratio standards established by the Department of Defense. If you work in a licensed childcare facility, you will need to follow your state's regulations. In all cases, check with your supervisor to make sure you're following your organization's policies and procedures.

NOTES:

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



NOTES:

Types of Interactions With Youth

Just getting youth to attend a program is not enough. To ensure youth participate fully in the program and achieve its expected outcomes, you need to be able to facilitate it effectively.³⁰ As you've learned, this includes implementing high-quality youth development practices.

You can also use different types of interactions to engage youth more deeply and help them build knowledge and skills.³¹ A day at a Club or Youth Center for any young person should involve opportunities to interact with staff, volunteers and other youth:

- Individually
- In a small group
- In a large group

Individual or One-on-One Mentoring³²

This approach creates a sense of safety and ownership over the subject matter. For example, if a youth struggles with reading, this stays between the youth and adult. To build your connection, think about and use conversation starters. Support the young person in learning and practicing new skills, and help regularly measure their progress. This approach allows the young person to reflect deeply on lessons learned.

To preserve everyone's safety, staff, volunteers and other adults should never be alone when working one-on-one with a child. The pair should meet in a spot in the Club or Youth Center where it's somewhat quiet, but also visible to other staff and youth, being situated among them.

Examples of individual interactions:

- Situational or planned guidance sessions addressing personal problems, such as relationships with others, self-concept, school or family.
- Lessons or skill instruction conducted individually. Some members may need additional help before they can compete effectively in larger groups.
- Teachable moments, when a young person spontaneously expresses a particular interest, observation or concern to a staff member that leads to further exploration of and guidance on that subject.

Small Groups³³

When facilitated by a skilled, caring adult, small-group activities offer youth rich opportunities to establish connections with peers, gain social-emotional and coping skills, and engage with difficult topics through honest, safe discussions. Ensure small-group meetings are more than just a collection of activities. Pay attention to the sequencing of activities. Allow the group to get to know each other, give and receive support, and save time for conversation and reflection when addressing sensitive topics.

SECTION

4

Principles of Program
Planning and Delivery



In Clubs and Youth Centers, small groups are typically made up of eight to 12 youth who meet regularly with an adult leader for a specific program. This is the delivery method for Targeted Programs and some High-Yield Activities. Examples include:

- Sessions in which a group leader follows a curriculum or provides skill instruction – like first aid, guitar class, SMART Moves or Money Matters.
- Teams in which members learn and practice a skill or sport and participate in competitive events, such as baseball, basketball, billiards, soccer, table tennis and volleyball.
- Group clubs in which members meet to pursue a common interest. Through a democratic process, they select, plan and implement their own activities with the guidance of an adult advisor. Example of this could include Keystone Club, Torch Club, a photography club or arts club.
- Cooperative learning projects in which a small group of three to eight members work together to achieve a goal or complete a project. Such projects might include a Club or Youth Center garden or community service projects.

Large Groups

Large-group activities (also known as drop-in) informally engage youth and provide them with opportunities for maximum freedom and mobility. This delivery method is often used for High-Yield Activities. Examples of large-group activities are:

- Free play activities in the gym or gamesroom
- Dances and special events
- Movies and presentations
- On-the-spot fun, games, contests or stunts

When working with large groups, try using grouper techniques to help form teams and split into smaller groups.

Practicing Personal CQI

In The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs section of this BLUEprint, you read about continuous quality improvement (CQI). You discovered how important it is for enhancing program quality and boosting our positive impact on young people. You learned that CQI is a way of thinking and learning. It's a cyclical, ongoing process with three phases: assess, plan and improve.

Each day, take small steps to practice personal CQI.

- **Assess:** Think about the effectiveness of your sessions with youth. Did you use good youth development practices today? Did the kids have fun and learn what they were supposed to?
- **Plan:** Make sure you're prepared for your sessions. Make adjustments based on what you learned today. What will you try or do differently?
- **Improve:** Implement your plan and improvement strategies.

Start over each day, reflecting on what is and isn't working in your programming. Talk regularly with youth, your teammates and your supervisor. Gather input on what is going well and what could be done better and how. Remember: Keep your steps small and do-able. Look for and learn from your quick wins – and use them to stay motivated!

NOTES:

RESOURCE

Refer to the [YDToolbox mobile app](#) for helpful grouper ideas.

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



NOTES:

Here are some additional tips for everyday personal CQI in collaboration with the youth you serve, your teammates and your supervisor.

- Ask more experienced peers or your supervisor to observe when you're facilitating programming with youth. Ask them to give you feedback.
- Ask more seasoned peers to allow you to observe their youth program facilitation, or to share their best tips related to aspects of the work you find challenging.
- When you have one-on-one meetings with your supervisor, discuss what you think is going well and where you're having challenges. Ask for support or coaching on improvements you'd like to make.
- When you're doing reflections with youth in your sessions, ask them for feedback on how the session went and how you could make it better.

Regularly "take the pulse" of young people and get input from them. There are many ways to do this, such as using the tip above, or working with your teammates to conduct listening sessions, or running quick, fun polls with youth.

Planning Your Own Programs and Activities

You've learned about the basic building blocks of Club and Youth Center programs and explored some key factors that greatly influence program quality. Now it's time to consider how to put all of those together in your own program and activity planning.

Planning is an important feature in implementing effective, engaging Targeted Programs and High-Yield Activities. Your careful planning helps to provide structure and context for young people's learning experiences. It keeps you organized, well-versed in the content, and helps you with time management. It helps you be consistent about incorporating the Elements of a High-Quality Session. When you start with a good plan, after facilitating the program or activity, you can more objectively reflect on what went well, what challenges you had, and how well youth achieved the expected outcomes.

Whether you are planning a session or activity for the day or a Targeted Program, ask yourself these questions:³⁴

- How can I make the experience fun for youth by incorporating their interests and passions?
- With whom am I working? (Include the number of youth; youth with specific abilities, developmental characteristics or learning styles; and the ages and gender of youth.)
- How well am I integrating the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development?
- How well have I built in social-emotional development opportunities for youth? (This could include your use of Community Builders and emotional check-ins, for instance.)
- Is the program or activity helping youth achieve positive outcomes in one or more of the three priority outcome areas?

RESOURCE

The BGCA Pulse Check Guide, available at [BGCA.net/ProgramQuality](https://www.bgca.net/ProgramQuality), is an excellent resource for getting just-in-time feedback from kids on how they feel about their Club Experience.

SECTION

4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



- At the end of the program or activity, what do I want youth to think (knowledge), feel (attitudes), and do (skills)?
- How will I engage youth in knowledge and skill building? (This could include one-on-one, small- or a large-group opportunities.)
- What resources do I need to implement the activity or program?
- How will I know if youth have achieved the expected outcomes?

To help you better plan and implement your daily sessions, use the [Session Planning Template](#) and the [Reference Handout: Elements of a High-Quality Session](#), located at the end of this section. They are meant to be used together.

Use the first page of the Session Planning Template when planning your session. After you facilitate the session, use the second page to reflect on how it went, how well it achieved its intended objective(s), and what you could do differently next time. Ask your supervisor for guidance on how to use the template. In your one-on-one meetings with your supervisor, be sure to discuss your post-session reflections.

If you need a tool to help you plan and implement Targeted Programs more effectively, take a look at the [Targeted Program Plan Template](#) and the [Sample Targeted Program Plan](#) for an instructional chess program, located at the end of the Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment section of this BLUEprint. This tool will help you plan your program over its intended time frame. It will help you identify the resources you'll need to successfully implement the program. It will also help you see from the beginning how your program will contribute to desired youth outcomes in one or more of the three priority outcome areas of the Formula for Impact. Ask your supervisor for guidance on how to use this template, too.

Although you may not be responsible for planning the overall program schedule for your Club or Youth Center, your own program and activity planning and that of your teammates certainly factor into it. It's important to understand that building an overall program schedule also takes into account all of the above questions. In addition, it considers available space; the skills, abilities, knowledge, experience levels and interests of staff and volunteers; and the other key factors for enhancing program quality that you just explored. Remember, these include balancing youth interests and needs, free choice versus fixed schedules, staff-to-youth ratios, types of interactions with youth, and practicing continuous quality improvement as individuals and as a team.

NOTES:

SECTION 4

Principles of Program Planning and Delivery



Next Steps for Learning: Principles of Program Planning and Delivery

Take your learning to the next level using these reflection questions and resources.

Reflection Questions

After you think about and answer these questions, share your responses with your supervisor in your next one-on-one meeting. Ask for help as needed.

1. To what degree are you and your teammates using the building blocks of programming described in this section – Targeted Programs, High-Yield Activities, Elements of a High-Quality Session and special events? What are the strengths of your team, and in what areas can it improve? In your own programs and activities, what are your strengths, and in what areas can you improve? What do you need to make those improvements?

2. This section described techniques for improving program quality – balancing youth interests and needs, offering youth choices in programming, varying types of interactions with youth, and practicing continuous quality improvement (CQI). At your site, how much can you influence these factors? Where you can influence them, how often do you evaluate how they are working? How often do you offer feedback to your team and supervisor? In your work, what do you do to practice personal CQI on an ongoing basis?

3. How much time do you have to plan the programs and activities you offer youth? What can you do to become more effective at planning your programs and activities? What supports, training or coaching do you need to build your planning skills?



4. How much involvement do you have in planning the overall program for your Club or Youth Center? How much or how often does your supervisor engage you and your teammates in site-level program planning or assessment processes? What would you like to do to help with site-level program planning and assessment? What supports, training or coaching do you need to do that well?

Suggested Action Steps and Resources

To build your program planning and delivery skills, visit the [BGCA.net](https://www.bgca.net) Training page to access Spillett Leadership University. Log in and use the search function to find a full range of learning opportunities for Club and Youth Center staff in the School of Youth Development. These include in-service learning modules facilitated by certified learning coaches, online courses, and instructor-led sessions and workshops. Ask your supervisor what training or coaching they or your organization can provide.

To learn how to use your site's data to get a sense of what's going well and where improvements are needed, ask your supervisor to show you how to access and interpret available member survey data from the National Youth Outcomes Initiative (NYOI). Or ask how to use other data your Club or Youth Center collects, such as membership and attendance data. Register on [BGCA.net/MyData](https://www.bgca.net/MyData), to access your site's NYOI data. This portal has tutorials and many helpful features and report options to help you understand and use your site's data. The My Data Road Map, available on [BGCA.net/ProgramQuality](https://www.bgca.net/ProgramQuality), guides you in using your data in the Assess phase of your CQI process.



Reference Handout:

Integrating Character Development Throughout the Club Day

This sample weekly program schedule shows an hour each day in the Club or Youth Center. Each of the shaded rectangles depicts a session with explicit or taught character development elements.

5–6 p.m.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Art and Design Nexus	Tracing Value Word on Printing Foam Ages 6 to 9	Self-Portrait With Natural Materials	Tracing Value Word on Printing Foam Ages 10 to 12	Leadership Skits Ages 8 to 12	Visual Arts Project Time
Learning Alcove	African-American Leaders 20 Questions Ages 9 to 12	Parks in My Community Ages 10+	Drawing Emotions Ages 6 to 9	Parks in My Community Ages 6 to 9	Program Showcase Planning
Gym	Step Choreography Phase 2	All Stars Soccer Teams A,C,E,F	Outside: Cheese Rolling	All Stars Soccer Teams A,C,E,F	Hula Ball With Big and Little Partners
Computer Lab	My.Future Leadership Unit Level 1	Education Games Activity	Story Boarding	Education Games Activity	Friends: Two Truths and a Lie
Gamesroom	Cup Stacking Tournament	Spider Web	Fabulous Flags: Character Version	Four Square Tourney/Magic the Gathering	State Gamesroom Tournament Practice Program Ages 6 to 10
Exploration Center	Lemon Batteries	Club Entryway Beautification	Your Friends, the Media and You	Values in Personal Decision Making	Oobleck & Speakers
Eating Area	Board Games Activity/Chess Club Program	Fruit Smoothies	Club Pride Team Meeting and Fruit Smoothies	DIY STEM: Make Your Soda Pop	Energy Ball Pass, Famous Duos, Charades
Teen Center	Mayor Guest Speaking	I Am I Be/ yogawith adriene.com	The Power of Budgeting/Magic the Gathering	Tutoring/Video Games/Hang Out	Outside: Tire Changing Service Scheduling Calls

Session Planning Template

Pre-Session Planning



Complete this before facilitating your session, and submit it to your supervisor.

Name:	
Session Title:	Date and Time of Session:
Age Group:	Group Size:
Location of Session:	
Session Objective(s) or Purpose(s):	Priority Outcome: (Check One or More) <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Success <input type="checkbox"/> Good Character and Citizenship <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Lifestyles
Brief Description:	Core Program Area (Check One) <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership and Service <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Wellness <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Sports and Recreation <input type="checkbox"/> The Arts
Session Preparation and Setup:	Supplies Needed:
Additional Staff Needed:	Petty Cash Needed:
Vehicle Needed:	Projected Budget/Cost:
Additional Resources Needed/Coordinated:	On-the-Spot Fun Ideas:
Adaptations or Variations: <i>Consider learning styles, ability, skill level, age and developmental stages of youth in your group.</i>	
Date Submitted:	Date Approved:
Submitted By:	Approved By:



Session Planning Template

Post-Session Self-Reflection

Complete after conducting the activities in your session.

Name:		
Session Title:		Date and Time of Session:
Lessons Learned: What happened? What worked? What didn't work?		
Successes/Strengths:		Challenges:
Check One: <input type="checkbox"/> Repeat <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Repeat	No. of youth who participated:	Achieved Desired Objective(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, how?
Suggested Changes:		What's Next?
Date Submitted:		Submitted By:

Instructions for Using This Template

What is the Session Planning Template? This form helps to track the needs, planning and approval of a program session.

Why is this tool important? Sessions with activities that may require more staff, extra materials, a vehicle, guest speaker or additional budget often need more planning consideration. This form allows staff to communicate those needs and receive approval for sessions or activities that need additional planning or resources.

How do I use it? Before the session, fill out the first page of this form and discuss it with your supervisor or other staff involved. Then document the request and any approvals at the bottom. This form should be used with the Reference Handout: Elements of a High-Quality Session.

After the session, spend some time reflecting on how well it achieved its intended objective(s), and fill out the second page of the form. Share and discuss your insights with your supervisor at your next one-on-one meeting.

Reference Handout:

Elements of a High-Quality Session



Planning

(30-60 min., prior to session start)

- All aspects and components of Targeted Program sessions and High-Yield Activities must be planned.
- Throughout the session or activity time, include two group sizes in each activity (i.e., the whole group, smaller groups, pairs or individual work).
- Make sure the space, equipment and materials are set up before youth arrive.



Warm Welcome

(1-3 min.)

- Welcome each person in the group, and thank them for being present. If necessary, you can also take attendance during this time.
- Engage youth in meaningful conversations.



Community Builder

(3-10 min.)

- Include various types of activities to enhance social relations and define roles within groups. These often involve collaborative tasks.
- Use these to build supportive relationships, familiarity, and trust among youth and staff.
- Facilitate these throughout a session.
- Work with your group to pick an attention getter of the day. This is a gesture, signal or phrase to quickly capture everyone's attention when needed.



Group Agreements

(45-50 min. to create initially;
1-3 min. to review whenever
the group comes together)

- Create during the beginning of the first session, and revisit during each subsequent session.
- Provide a sense of structure and standards of behavior among participating members of the group. This helps to create emotional safety.



Main Activity: Working With Materials and Ideas

(25+ min.)

- For at least half of the session or activity time, engage members in working hands-on with their materials. They could also talk and engage with their peers around specific ideas, critical thinking or new perspectives.
- Try to include real choices for youth that influence the outcome of the activity.



Reflection

(5-10 min.)

- Give youth an opportunity to review what they have done, what they learned, and how it may apply to or influence their lives.
- Ask reflection questions and give youth time to write, draw, act out or discuss their reflections.



Recognition

(3-5 min.)

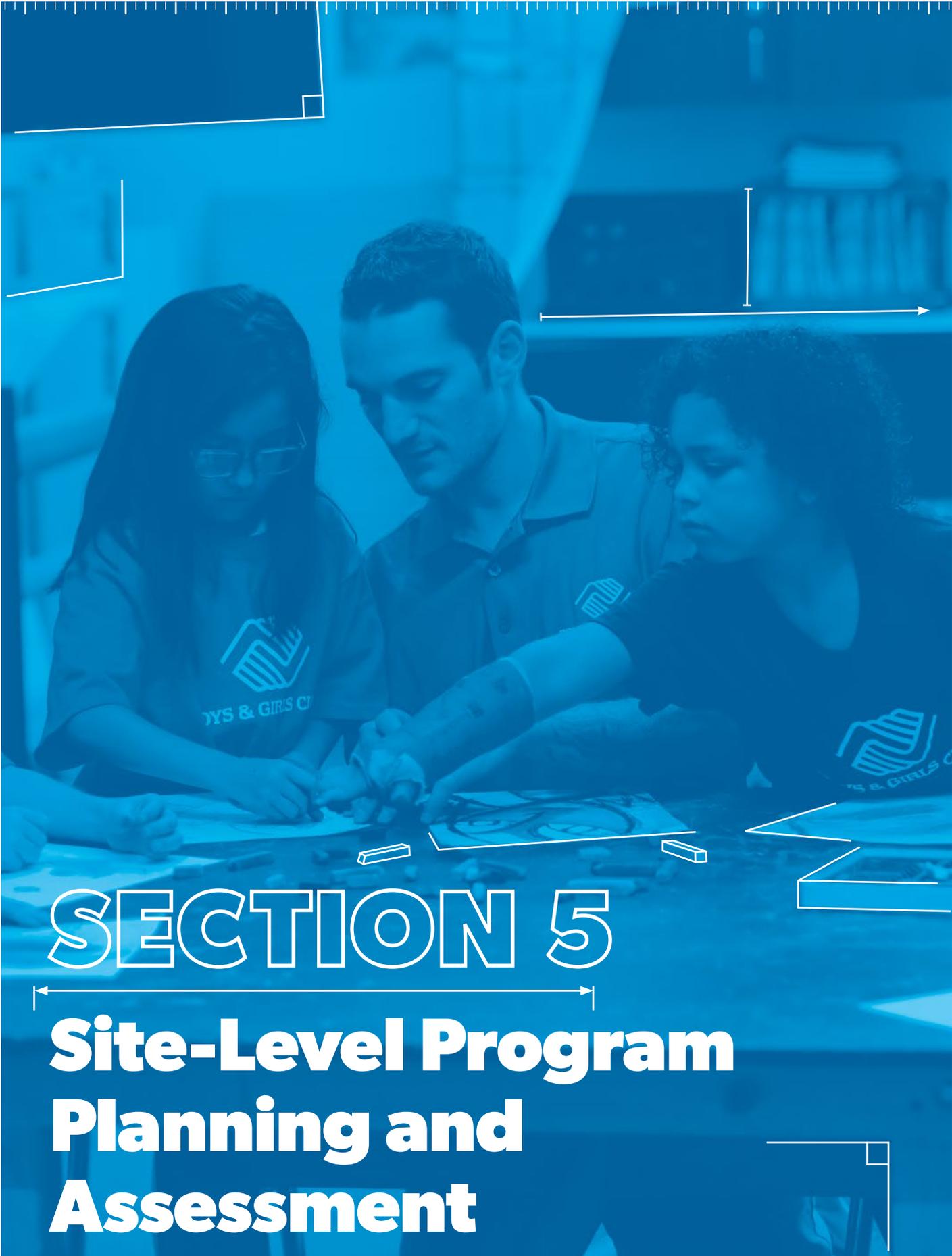
- Plan formal and informal ways to recognize and encourage youth.
- Make space for youth to provide positive recognition to each other.
- Encourage youth throughout the session.



Closing and Transition

(3-5 min.)

- Engage youth in putting away the materials and creating a nice space for the next activity. This can include pre-assigned jobs or working together as a group.
- Provide structure for youth by clearly explaining what they can expect to experience in their next program session or activity.



SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment

Section Summary:

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment

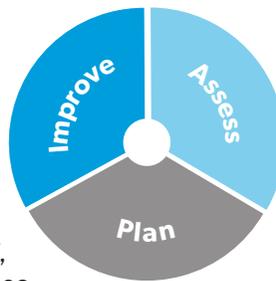
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Continuous Quality Improvement

Seeking to improve quality is part of striving to create the best-possible Outcome-Driven Club Experience, as called for in our Formula for Impact theory of change. Every Club or Youth Center, no matter its size or resources, can and should make continuous quality improvement (CQI) activities a part of its practice. CQI is a cyclical, ongoing process with three phases:

- **Assess:** Review available data and stakeholder feedback to understand how your Club is performing. Understanding where you are now helps you know where you need to go.
- **Plan:** Collaborate with your staff to develop an action plan to build on strengths and address growth areas.
- **Improve:** Implement the action plan with your staff, monitor your progress, and celebrate your successes in improving program quality.



PURPOSE/AUDIENCE

Primarily for **site directors** and **site-level program directors**, this section introduces the basic phases of a continuous quality improvement process. It outlines tasks for annual program planning and assessment. This includes establishing Club-wide goals and strategies, and building those into seasonal and weekly program schedules. It also provides tips and resources for evaluating overall program effectiveness.

Overall Program Planning and Assessment

Special Note: Be sure to use the Planner component of the Program Basics Suite in conjunction with the guidelines offered in this section. The Planner is an online collection of tools to make it easier and quicker to construct effective Club program plans and schedules. Learn more about the Planner on BGCA.net/ProgramBasics.

With the Formula for Impact as your framework, use the steps outlined below. These align with the Assess and Plan phases of a typical CQI process. Use the steps to help you plan a balanced annual overall program that meets the unique needs of your youth, staff, community, site and organization.

- **Gather Information (Assess)**
Tap as many sources as you can. Consider all the suggestions you could reasonably incorporate into your Club or Youth Center's program schedule. Consider national youth trends, issues and needs. Think about the strengths, needs, resources and opportunities in your community, your organization and your site. Review attendance, program participation and youth outcome measurement data related to the previous year's overall program plan.
- **Establish Club-Wide Goals (Plan)**
With your staff team, identify two or three Club- or Youth Center-wide goals to address during the year. Develop those goals based on your analysis of pertinent organizational, site and community data, and input from staff and youth. If there are organizational goals, your site's goals should help meet them. The strategies you choose should be written in the SMART (Specific,

SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment



NOTES:

Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-Bound) manner. Make sure all staff members and volunteers are clear on their roles in achieving the goals.

- **Determine Available Resources (Plan)**

Think about how to best tap your staff and volunteers' knowledge, talents, skills, relationships and resources. Consider the families of the youth you serve, and any existing and potential partner organizations in the community.

- **Create Your Site's Overall Program (Plan)**

Create a master schedule and a balanced program plan that reflects your Club or Youth Center's needs, available resources and goals. Make sure it includes all programs, activities and special events that will be offered. You need to balance many factors to build an overall program that is developmentally and culturally appropriate, fun, engaging and relevant, and helps youth learn and grow. Out of this master plan, work with your staff to create an annual calendar, seasonal schedules and weekly schedules.

- **Develop Targeted Program Plans (Plan)**

As you teach your staff how to plan and implement their programs, guide them in developing Targeted Program plans. Ask staff to submit plans to you ahead of time so you can review and discuss them together. This shows what resources will be required to successfully implement an individual Targeted Program. It also helps staff see how each program helps youth achieve positive Academic Success, Good Character and Citizenship, or Healthy Lifestyles outcomes.

- **Promote Club Programming (Plan)**

To have a positive impact on the most kids possible in your community, put energy and creativity into your outreach and promotion efforts to youth, their families and other community members. You and your team can promote programs and events in many ways. Use flyers; posters; bulletin boards; newsletters; websites; social media; and kid, family and staff word of mouth. Use all available communications options.

- **Evaluate the Overall Program (Assess)**

Regularly evaluating your Club or Youth Center's overall program is key to increasing its quality. It also helps inform your planning for the next program cycle. Assess how well you and your staff have implemented a balanced mix of activities and practices that facilitate a developmentally rich environment for the young people in your care. Observe staff while they work with youth, and provide feedback and coaching. Collect input from youth, families and staff using varied methods. ■

SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment



As the director or program director of your Club or Youth Center, planning and implementing the programming at your site is one of your greatest responsibilities. You get to shape your site's annual overall program. You do this for and with young people, staff members and families in your community. What results from your effective planning? Young people will achieve positive youth outcomes, and your organization will be on its way to achieving annual and even longer-range strategic goals.

Our Formula for Impact theory of change articulates how Clubs and Youth Centers like yours can help youth achieve positive Academic Success, Good Character and Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles through an Outcome-Driven Club Experience. The Formula for Impact provides a clear framework for planning and implementing your overall program.

Continuous Quality Improvement

Seeking to improve quality is part of striving to create the best-possible Outcome-Driven Club Experience. This was explained in the first section of this BLUEprint, The Foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs. You learned how Clubs and Youth Centers need to take part in continuous quality improvement (CQI). But what does this involve? A robust CQI process seeks to:

- Define how success looks
- Explain and create meaningful solutions to better serve youth
- Ensure consistent high-quality youth development practice, program planning and delivery
- Achieve youth outcomes

Every Club or Youth Center, no matter its size or resources, can and should make CQI activities a part of its practice. CQI is a cyclical, ongoing process with three phases:

- **Assess:** Review available data and stakeholder feedback to understand how your Club is performing. Understanding where you are helps you know where you need to go.
- **Plan:** Collaborate with your staff to develop an action plan to build on strengths and address growth areas.
- **Improve:** Implement the action plan with your staff, monitor your progress and celebrate your successes in improving program quality.



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RESOURCE

To learn more about leading a continuous quality improvement process in your Club or Youth Center, access the Club Experience brochure from [BGCA.net/ProgramQuality](https://www.bgca.net/ProgramQuality). This offers four strategies for leading a CQI process and breaks down the Assess, Plan and Improve phases into concrete action steps.

SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment



NOTES:

Overall Program Planning and Assessment

Special Note: Be sure to use the Planner component of the Program Basics Suite in conjunction with the guidelines offered in this section. The Planner is an online collection of tools to make it easier and quicker to construct effective Club program plans and schedules. Learn more about the Planner on [BGCA.net/ProgramBasics](https://www.bgca.net/ProgramBasics).

With the Formula for Impact as your framework, use the steps outlined below. You'll notice they loosely align with the Assess and Plan phases of a typical CQI process. These steps will help you plan a balanced annual overall program to meet the unique needs of your youth, staff, community, site and organization.

Start the process several months in advance. Collaborate with your staff and the youth and families you serve throughout the process.

Gather Information (Assess)

Tap as many sources as you can. Consider all the suggestions you could reasonably incorporate into your Club or Youth Center's program schedule. Start big by considering **national** youth trends, issues and needs. And consult reliable sources of national data to learn what youth need. Good sources include:

- [KIDS COUNT National Data Center](#)
- [childstats.gov](#)
- [ED Data Express](#)
- [Child Trends Databank](#)
- [Census American FactFinder](#)
- [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Statistical Briefing Book](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

Some of these national sources also provide **state** or **local** data. This would help as you next think about your local community. What makes your community unique? What are its strengths and challenges?

Think about your **organization** and **site**. What goals and priorities are already established? What grants, programs and scheduling or staffing structures are mandatory across all sites? Ask your supervisor about the non-negotiables.

Use [National Youth Outcomes Initiative \(NYOI\)](#) data to learn about your organization and Club site's strengths and opportunities for improvement. If you work in a Youth Center, use data from inspection reports and program quality assessments. Review your data to assess your last program plan, determine your successes and ponder opportunities for improvement.

Next, think about the **youth** in your site. Consider each age group. Use the information you gathered so far to draft questions to ask them in a future listening session. This is an essential part of the process! Engaging youth in the early planning helps to bring the Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development to life – in the way youth want to experience them. For example:

- What do they love to do?
- What is fun to them?

RESOURCE

The NYOI Member Survey measures youth and teen outcomes in the priority outcome areas. The survey also captures members' perceptions of the Club Experience. Participating Clubs can survey youth and staff each spring. Access your Club's NYOI survey data on [BGCA.net/MyData](https://www.bgca.net/MyData). The My Data Road Map, available on [BGCA.net/ProgramQuality](https://www.bgca.net/ProgramQuality), guides you in the Assess phase of your CQI process.

SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment

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PD

- What do they hope to do at the Club or Youth Center each day?
- What would their parents or caregivers like them to learn?

Think about your **staff**. What are their strengths and passions? What unique skills can each bring to your overall program?

Finally, think about your **facility, equipment, supplies** and **budget**. What are the opportunities and constraints?

You and your staff have an ongoing task... to plan effective eight- to 12-week seasonal or quarterly sessions throughout the year. Make sure you allow plenty of time to gather feedback from Club youth on what programs and activities they enjoyed, their ideas for improvement, and new topics they would like to learn. Their feedback will go a long way to improving your program planning.

Write down all the information you gathered. Most likely, you won't be able to incorporate all of the ideas into your current program schedule. But they will create a wonderful database as you plan future sessions.

Establish Club-Wide Goals (Plan)

Together with your staff team, identify two or three Club- or Youth Center-wide goals as the most important priorities to address during the year. Review and analyze pertinent organizational, site and community data. Develop your goals based on the findings. And don't forget to consider input from your staff and youth. If there are organizational goals – such as increasing average daily attendance, bolstering teen membership or offering workforce readiness programs – be sure to incorporate them at your site.

Your goals also may focus on operating in a way to enhance program quality. Such goals could include:

- Strengthening staff's youth development practices
- Improving teamwork and communication
- Making your climate more positive and supportive of youth and staff

To achieve your Club-wide goals, adhere to timelines and write strategies in the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-Bound) manner. Make sure all staff members and volunteers understand their roles in contributing to Club-wide goals.

This might seem complicated. So let's consider a real-world example to visualize how it all works. The Menu of Goals and Sample Strategies that follows lists goals, along with potential strategies for achieving them. It's adapted from one Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta created for its sites. To develop their Club-wide goals and strategies, site directors worked with their site teams – comprised of full- and part-time staff and youth – and followed a few basic steps:

- Select one staff-focused goal and one youth-focused goal from the menu.
- Develop strategies on how to achieve the selected goals.
- Record decisions on a Club-Wide Goals and Strategies Plan.
- Work together to implement the plan.³⁵

NOTES:

RESOURCE

Listening sessions and surveys are great ways to learn what youth and their parents or caregivers expect from your Club or Youth Center. BGCA's Pulse Checks Guide, [BGCA.net/ProgramQuality](https://www.bgca.net/ProgramQuality), provides guidelines and question banks for parent surveys and youth listening sessions.

SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment



NOTES:

Menu of Goals and Sample Strategies

Staff-Focused Goals

1. Achieve effective staff communication practices.
2. Maintain high levels of staff morale and buy-in.
3. Implement consistent positive discipline practices across all staff and spaces.
4. Promote positive adult-youth relationships.

Sample Strategies

- Ensure all staff take on meaningful responsibilities in the quality improvement process.
- Create staff meeting rituals.
- Establish roles outside programming (peer trainings, ongoing observations, topical committees).
- Start a staff reward and recognition system.
- Implement a series of team-building activities.
- Facilitate in-house positive discipline trainings.
- Utilize positive time-outs.
- Implement a Club-wide protocol for handling behavioral issues.
- Institute a formal system that allows youth to shadow staff.
- Train staff on healthy boundaries.
- Establish a formal group mentoring program with staff and volunteers.

Youth-Focused Goals

1. Promote a sense of belonging at the Club.
2. Promote a positive social environment.
3. Establish positive norms for behavior throughout the Club.
4. Create positive physical spaces.

Sample Strategies

- Establish a house system by forming small communities, homerooms or family groups for youth, organized by age group.
- Provide youth weekly team-building exercises.
- Engage in a Club-wide branding campaign.
- Assign Club-wide conflict resolution rituals.
- Launch a Club-wide anti-bullying campaign.
- Create peer affinity groups that are based on shared interests.
- Establish a Teen Ambassador program.
- Create formal, meaningful roles for youth (e.g., job program).
- Implement a Club-wide reflection protocol for all program spaces and blocks.
- Establish “interior design” committees.
- Redesign program spaces to allow for multiple functions and activities (e.g., homework + solitary reading + group work).
- Turn the Club into a rotating art gallery.

SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment

SD

PD

Ready to create your own Goals and Strategies Plan? The Club-Wide Goals and Strategies Plan Template has space for recording your organization's goals, strategies, outputs, staff roles, resources needed and the timeline for completing each strategy. It also has a section for monitoring progress as you implement the strategies. Find the template at the end of this section, along with a completed sample to give you a good sense of how it may be filled out. You can also find it online in the Planner: BGCA.net/ProgramBasics.

Determine Available Resources (Plan)

Your site team is your most valuable resource. Each staff member and volunteer brings unique knowledge, skill sets and relationships to your overall program. Leverage them. Let them contribute their talents, passions and interests.

The parents, caregivers and family members of the youth you serve are also important resources. You might have an interpreter, sign language instructor, swim coach, or high school counselor among them. Here are some strategies for engaging parents or caregivers more deeply in your Club or Youth Center life.

- Hang butcher paper at the front desk for parents to write down their hobbies or favorite activities. Ask about their interests, and identify activities or resources that may appeal to them.
- Have a focus group at a family engagement night where you share the upcoming semester schedule. See if any parents would like to be involved with a specific program or session.
- Keep a list at the front desk where parents can share what they do for work. Schedule them to share their career experiences with youth in relevant Targeted Programs.
- Offer opportunities for youth-parent engagement within the Club. Include fun activities, like family cooking nights. Share the calendar of events with all Club or Youth Center youth.
- Connect youth and families with resources in the community, such as food pantries, academic support and counseling.

Potential community partners might be able to provide your Club or Youth Center with resources. Perhaps they could contribute snacks or meals, equipment or program supplies, volunteers for special events or programming, transportation, youth referrals, or tickets to sporting or cultural events. Others might be able to provide services to the families of the youth you serve.

Brainstorm all potential community resources and partnerships to enhance your Club or Youth Center's services and meet program goals. Make a list of all nonprofit, community-based, youth-serving and recreational organizations in your area. These could include:

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Counseling services | • Hospitals | • Postsecondary institutions |
| • Employers/businesses | • Indian Health Services | • Schools |
| • Fire stations | • Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs | • Sports and recreation centers |
| • Food banks | • Nursing homes | • Tribal councils |
| • Foundations | • Police stations | • Tribal elders |
| • Grief organizations | | • Workforce boards |

NOTES:

SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment



NOTES:

All partnerships should be mutually beneficial. Before you approach a potential community partner, think how the partner could add value to your programming. Determine which of your site's goals a potential partnership could support, but consider setting limits to prevent additional requirements for your site team. And last but certainly not least: Determine what your Club or Youth Center could offer the partner in return.

Here are some suggestions for initiating partnership conversations.

- Attend community meetings and events. Build relationships with local residents and government, business and nonprofit representatives.
- Ask an existing community partner to introduce you to a potential new partner.
- Email or call a person from the community outreach department of a local agency you would like to learn more about.

Work Readiness Partnerships

Develop partnerships with local businesses to expose young people to a variety of occupations. Through work readiness activities, youth can discover job opportunities that interest them. As a result, they'll be motivated to develop important new skills.

Use partnerships to help youth get work-ready. Consider a few examples.

- Schedule quarterly occupation-themed visits, job-shadowing, internships and pre-apprenticeships.
- Collaborate with community or technical colleges for dual enrollment and certification opportunities.
- Provide youth out-of-Club work experiences.

Partnering With Schools

Whether you work in a traditional, school-based or other type of site, it's important to collaborate with your local schools. This is not just to help youth achieve Academic Success, but also because schools are an integral part of young people's ecosystem, along with their families, out-of-school-time providers and other community assets. Below are some tips for developing strong partnerships with schools.

- Feature your site's programs and services to highlight a shared agenda of promoting youth development (i.e., academic enrichment, homework help, arts, sports leagues).³⁶
- Develop trusting relationships with the principals, teachers, custodial staff, cafeteria staff and others from young people's schools.
- Invite school staff to your site for open house events to see your programming in action.
- Work with school staff to identify students who may need additional academic assistance, and provide them with regular progress updates.

SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment

SD

PD

Create Your Site's Overall Program (Plan)

As you begin to create your Club or Youth Center's program schedule, keep your annual goals and strategies top of mind. Fill the schedule with programs, activities, and special events that best fit your site's needs and available resources. Create a master schedule and a balanced program plan that reflects Club- or Youth Center-wide goals. Include all programs, activities and special events offered. Build it by filling in mandated programs as needed, then have staff fill in remaining slots with other interest- and needs-based programs.

As shown in other sections of this Program Basics BLUEprint, you need to balance many factors to build an overall program that is developmentally appropriate, engaging, relevant, and helps youth learn and grow. One of the most critical factors is fun. It's so important that it's one of our Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development. From young people's perspective, fun is the most important part of your program schedule. To them, it should be evident in every slot of the schedule – in every program area, at all times of the day. Fun is the reason youth are attracted to your Club or Youth Center, so it's your job to make sure youth find fun there.

Your overall program should:

- Be developmentally appropriate for different age groups.
- Utilize all available staff and program areas based on your staffing pattern.
- Provide a balanced mix of interest- and needs-based Targeted Programs and High-Yield Activities to help youth achieve Academic Success, Good Character and Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles outcomes.
- Provide opportunities for structured and less-structured time.
- Reflect and celebrate your community's cultures, traditions and customs.

Annual Calendar

Create an annual calendar for your site to ensure a well-balanced schedule during the entire school year. When you have varied program and activity themes at all times, every young person has something to look forward to. The annual calendar should note days when there is special scheduling so Club families and staff can plan. This might include schools' early release days, days the Club is closed for staff training or holidays, and special events like family nights. The annual calendar should be easily accessible for families and staff.

The purpose of an annual calendar is to capture Club goals and constraints. You might have a seasonal focus – such as Academic Success during the summer to combat summer learning loss, or Good Character and Citizenship during the back-to-school season to support youth in returning to school with a focus on values. Also document when you will conduct staff training. This will help you plan for the wide variety of learning your staff and young people need. This may include emergency safety training with youth and staff during the first month of the school year, or how to administer the NYOI survey to youth in February.

During annual calendar planning, take into account significant events in young people's schedules, such as a school winter break. Such a landmark is a natural place to end a session or semester.

NOTES:

RESOURCE

For a program calendar example that spreads a variety of Healthy Lifestyles programs across the school year to provide a balance of social-emotional development and physical activity, search for the Annual Health and Wellness Calendar on BGCA.net.

SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment



NOTES:

Seasonal Schedule

Lay out your detailed annual plan into a seasonal schedule. Work with your staff to incorporate your chosen goals and annual calendar events and constraints, and define how that schedule will be structured. The seasonal schedule will include your specific Targeted Programs and activities, designate age-group break-outs, and show the opportunities from each Core Program Area.

Use your seasonal schedule to incorporate special recurring features – such as snack or meal time, youth meeting time, or a rolling arrival time block. A rolling arrival features activities youth can easily join at any time, because not all youth arrive at the same time.

This type of schedule will also help you determine staff-to-youth ratios as you put large-group and small-group offerings into the mix.

Each seasonal schedule should last eight to 12 weeks. Close out your seasonal schedule's Targeted Programs by celebrating the goals and targets your staff met. Collect and review input from youth and staff to guide your plan for improvements to the next seasonal schedule.

Site Weekly Schedule

Make the seasonal schedule the basis for your site weekly schedules. The site weekly schedule helps guide staff in planning their daily sessions and activities. It shows which rooms are being used for each type of programming during each time slot. The difference between a seasonal schedule and a site weekly schedule is the level of detail: A seasonal schedule will name each Targeted Program offered, including time, location and age group. A site weekly schedule indicates which lessons from that Targeted Program to facilitate during that week.

Work with your staff to create a site weekly schedule for your entire site. This will keep you and your staff organized, and it helps youth and their families know what to expect. Just like the seasonal schedule, the site weekly schedule is based on time of day and location.

When creating your site's weekly schedule with your team, keep these important considerations in mind.

- Provide your staff daily planning time before or after programming.
- Ensure youth have the opportunity to choose programs or activities at least once per day.
- Schedule your most impactful programs at the time of day when the most youth are present in the Club.
- Schedule half of your staff to be “openers,” and the other half to be “closers.” That way they will all be on the clock when the most youth are present. It also prevents overstaffing when fewer members are in the building.
- Give teens their own space, programs and activities.

Develop Targeted Program Plans (Plan)

When teaching your staff how to plan and implement their programs, guide them to develop Targeted Program Plans. Ask them to submit their plans to you ahead of time. That will give you time to review and discuss the plans together. You'll each clearly see what resources are required for each Targeted

SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment



Program. Finally, Targeted Program Plans help staff understand how each program contributes to desired youth outcomes in the three priority outcome areas of the [Formula for Impact](#).

A good Targeted Program Plan presents the:

- **Name** of the program
- **Core Program Area** it fits into
- **Priority outcome area** it supports
- Program **description**
- **Target audience** – Who will be served by this program? What age group? Is it designated for boys or girls only?
- Amount of **time required** – For example, a group club may have weekly meetings for an hour; a Power Hour homework help program may last two hours daily, five days a week.
- **Required resources** – How many staff and/or volunteers will be needed? What equipment or materials are required? How much will the program cost?
- **Expected outcomes** – What knowledge, attitudes or skills will members gain by the conclusion of the program?
- **Success measures** – Clear objectives and outcomes are stated.

Let's take a moment to discuss the importance of success measures. When measuring the final outcomes against the program objectives, stakeholders will learn whether the program is having the intended impact. Just what should you track to ensure the program is working? Generally, quantifiable measures. These might include the number or percentage of youth who complete the program, post-test improvement results of knowledge or attitudes, skills mastered, or a report of changed behavior. Don't fall into the trap of trying to report on everything. Just identify the most critical outcome measures you expect to achieve.

Find the [Targeted Program Plan Template](#) and [Sample Targeted Program Plan](#) for an instructional chess program at the end of this section, and share them with your staff.

Once you approve staff members' Targeted Program Plans, continue to reinforce good daily planning habits by providing staff with ample planning time each day, especially when first implementing a new program plan and structure. Have staff complete and submit the [Session Planning Template](#) provided in the [Principles of Program Planning and Delivery](#) section of this BLUEprint.

To continue reinforcing good youth development practices, remind staff to incorporate the [Elements of a High-Quality Session](#) in their session plans. See the [reference handout](#) in the [Principles of Program Planning and Delivery](#) section.

Promote Club Programming (Plan)

Ever hear the quote, "Build it and they will come"? It's a nice sentiment, but not necessarily the best advice when it comes to promoting the programs, services, and special events you and your team work so hard to plan and implement. To positively impact the most kids in your community, you need to put energy and creativity into your outreach and promotion efforts. Make sure youth, their families and other community members know what you have to offer.

NOTES:

SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment



NOTES:

Everyone in the Club or Youth Center should share in this ongoing responsibility. Consider delegating specific assignments to your staff members – especially to those who are artistic, good communicators or tech savvy. There are so many ways to promote programs and events. Use flyers; posters; bulletin boards; newsletters; websites; social media; and kid, family and staff word of mouth. Tap into all of your available communications options. No matter what means you choose, make sure you and your team properly follow your organization’s policies and procedures about how communications are developed, reviewed and approved.

Here are some ideas for promoting your programs and events.

- When developing a message, especially for social media, concisely present the who, what, when and where of the event. Ask staff members or even teens, who are “digital natives,” for help in creating these.
- Send program schedules and special event flyers home with kids, or send them via snail mail or email.
- Provide copies of program schedules and special event fliers at the front desk for visitors to take.
- Designate a bulletin board in a public area of your Club or Youth Center for community or family announcements. Make sure to post current information on programming and special events.
- Take advantage of e-communications options. Does your Club or Youth Center have a text message system or an e-newsletter for communicating to parents? Can you send emails or post announcements on the Club or Youth Center Facebook page?
- Ask members to invite their friends to programs and special events.
- Use special events to recruit new youth to the Club or Youth Center. Offer free or discounted memberships for kids who sign up during special events.
- Ask your community partners, especially school personnel, to help spread the word.

Tap into your community resources for promotion. Can you attend PTA meetings at your feeder schools, to tell parents and teachers about your Club or Youth Center? Will the local library allow you to post fliers about your programs and events? Better yet – host a field trip there, run a library card sign-up event for your members, make your Club or Youth Center a regular Book Mobile stop, or invite a library staff member to your site to facilitate a book club!

Evaluate the Overall Program (Assess)

Regularly evaluating your Club or Youth Center’s overall program is key to increasing its quality. It also helps inform your planning process for the next program cycle.

During this time, assess how well you and your staff implemented the activities and practices. Was it a developmentally rich environment for the young people in your care? Measure your success at implementing the components of an effective, well-balanced overall program to meet the needs and interests of the youth you serve. During your assessment, gather input from staff and youth. Also review available and pertinent data – such as Club or Youth Center attendance, individual program participation and youth outcome measurements.

RESOURCES

BGCA has developed a staff management bulletin for Club and Youth Center directors on promising practices for supervision, coaching and professional development. This bulletin contains a tool called Considerations for Effective Staff Observations. BGCA.net/ProgramQuality

The David P. Weikart Center’s Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) is a tested, research-based observational assessment tool that Clubs and Youth Centers can use to strengthen staff’s youth development practice and improve program quality.

SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment

SD

PD

There are several ways to evaluate Club or Youth Center programming. Each of the following methods can be applied to any overall program. As explained earlier, these methods are examples of continuous quality improvement activities.

Observe your staff as they facilitate programming with youth. Observing staff interactions with youth, and providing feedback based on your observation, helps your employees grow. It's a positive opportunity to share control, focus on strengths and problem solve.³⁷ Effective managers use observation to ensure positive staff-youth interactions and program quality.

While you observe a staff member facilitating a session or activity, note whether the youth are having fun. Are the participants highly engaged in the session or activity, or do they seem bored or apathetic? Make sure to meet with staff members to share your feedback. Follow up with training and coaching to build specific skills.

Monitor youth participation. Are youth vying to get into certain programs, or asking you to bring one back? Do youth return to programs, or do they lose interest after their initial involvement? Look at your program participation data to identify patterns – such as youth selecting certain programs over others, attending some programs much more frequently or regularly than others, or coming later or only on certain days to avoid specific programs.

Use just-in-time techniques to collect feedback. Conduct Pulse Checks to see how youth are feeling at the Club. They are a fun way to gain insights by quickly, easily and inexpensively collecting data at any point in your program cycle. A Pulse Check can take the form of a quick poll or survey, or you can conduct a focus group with a small group of youth. Ask questions such as:

- Do you enjoy the program offerings?
- What do you get out of them?
- If it were offered again, would you participate?
- Would you invite a friend to participate?
- How can the program be improved?

Asking for their impressions of staff members is also important.

Determine whether the stated outputs were achieved. You developed your Club-wide goals and strategies and wrote them up in the SMART format (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-Bound). Were some of your strategies associated with outputs? Outputs are quantifiable and generally can be easily tracked and documented. For example, your Club may be implementing strategies to increase average daily attendance or the number of youth or teen members. Or you may be making a special push to engage more youth in a particular program or Core Program Area. Analyze your member management, attendance or other data to see whether you have met your target outputs.

NOTES:

RESOURCES

The Pulse Checks Guidebook shows you how to conduct quick, easy and inexpensive polls, listening sessions and parent surveys. Access it on [BGCA.net/ProgramQuality](https://www.bgca.net/ProgramQuality).

Another way to get staff feedback is through the annual [NYOI Staff Survey](#). This data provides insight on their youth development practices. It also addresses how staff feel about the supervision, training and professional development they receive, along with other aspects of their job satisfaction.

SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment



NOTES:

Ask your staff for feedback. During your regular staff meetings, discuss how they feel their own programs, and the overall program, are going. Have end-of-program-cycle debriefing sessions with your team. Use simple, open-ended questions, such as:

- What worked?
- What didn't work?
- Would you repeat this? If so, what would you do differently?

Involve your staff in collecting and analyzing data to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Then engage them in developing and executing on action plans for addressing the areas for improvement.

Evaluate programs from a cost-effectiveness standpoint. This type of assessment helps determine how much programs cost, and whether Club or Youth Center resources are being used effectively. You'll appreciate this information when it's time to develop and manage your site's current budget, with projected estimates for future budgets. By calculating the cost of materials, equipment and staff time, you'll determine the cost per youth participant. For example, imagine homework help and tutoring costs \$5,000 a year with 50 regular participants. Then the cost per participant is \$100 (\$5,000 divided by 50 participants).

SECTION 5

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment

Next Steps for Learning:

Site-Level Program Planning and Assessment



Take your learning to the next level using these reflection questions and resources.

Reflection Questions

After you think about and answer these questions, share your responses with your supervisor in your next one-on-one meeting. Ask for help as needed.

1. What's the connection between your existing site-level program planning and CQI processes? How does one process inform or intersect with the other?

2. What can you do to create a more robust continuous quality improvement mindset and process in your Club or Youth Center? What support and resources do you and your staff need in order to make that happen?

3. To what degree do you implement the overall program planning steps outlined in this chapter? What are your strengths and areas to improve?

4. What are you doing to enable both your full- and part-time staff to thoughtfully and carefully plan their programs and activities? What additional strategies could you implement to build their program planning skills (e.g., allotting them more planning time, providing more training and coaching, adopting some of the planning tools and templates provided in this BLUEprint)?



5. To what degree do you currently engage all of your staff in your site-level program planning processes? What else could you do to involve them in a more holistic, site-level way, rather than just having them focus on the programs and activities they facilitate?

6. Which of the program evaluation methods described in this section are you currently using well? Which methods would you like to start using? What do you and your staff need in order to more effectively evaluate program implementation at your site on an ongoing basis?

Suggested Action Steps and Resources

To learn more about leading a continuous quality improvement (CQI) process in your Club or Youth Center, access the Club Experience brochure from [BGCA.net/ProgramQuality](https://www.bgca.net/ProgramQuality). This brochure offers four strategies for leading a CQI process. It also breaks down the Assess, Plan and Improve phases of CQI into more concrete action steps.

To strengthen your program planning, management and staff management skills, visit the [BGCA.net](https://www.bgca.net) Training page to access Spillett Leadership University. Log in and use the search function to find a full range of learning opportunities for Club and Youth Center managers in the School of Management. These include online courses and instructor-led sessions and workshops. Talk with your supervisor to see what training or coaching they can provide. Also check out BGCA's series of staff management bulletins for Club and Youth Center managers on promising practices for hiring and onboarding; facilitating teamwork and staff communication; and supervision, coaching and professional development. Access the bulletins from [BGCA.net/ProgramQuality](https://www.bgca.net/ProgramQuality).

To increase your ability to interpret and use the data your organization or site collects, become familiar with the data available on [BGCA.net/MyData](https://www.bgca.net/MyData). Practice using the site's features to filter your site's data and generate different kinds of reports. Use the My Data Road Map, accessible from [BGCA.net/ProgramQuality](https://www.bgca.net/ProgramQuality), to guide your data mining efforts. Check out other helpful data use resources on the [Effective Data Use](#) webpage.

To become more effective at conducting staff observations and providing concrete feedback and coaching support, BGCA recommends utilizing the David P. Weikart Center's [Youth Program Quality Assessment](#) (YPQA). This is a tested, research-based observational assessment tool Clubs and Youth Centers can use to strengthen staff's youth development practice and improve program quality. BGCA's staff management bulletin on promising practices for supervision, coaching and professional development also provides a helpful tool called Considerations for Effective Staff Observations. Access the bulletin from [BGCA.net/ProgramQuality](https://www.bgca.net/ProgramQuality).

Club-Wide Goals and Strategies Plan Template



- Club-Wide Goal:**
- Staff-Focused
 - Youth-Focused

Write your goal here:

Strategies What two or three strategies will your Club adopt to achieve this goal?	Outputs What does success look like?	Key Players Who is responsible for designing and implementing?	Roles What role does each person play?	Resources What resources are needed (e.g., trainings, materials)?	Timeline On what dates was the strategy designed and executed?		Progress What is the status? (M = met, NM = not met, IP = in progress)				
					Designed	Executed		By	By	By	
1.							M NM IP	M NM IP	M NM IP	M NM IP	
2.							M NM IP	M NM IP	M NM IP	M NM IP	M NM IP
3.							M NM IP	M NM IP	M NM IP	M NM IP	M NM IP



Sample Club-Wide Goals and Strategies Plan

Club-Wide Goal:

- Staff-Focused
- Youth-Focused

Write your goal here:

Promote a sense of belonging at the Club

Strategies	Outputs	Key Players	Roles	Resources	Timeline		Progress			
					Designed	Executed	By Nov.	By Feb.	By May	
<p>What two or three strategies will your Club adopt to achieve this goal?</p> <p>1. By Sept. 1, establish a house system, with four houses, to provide all youth with a small community within the Club.</p>	<p>What does success look like?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four houses 	<p>Who is responsible for designing and implementing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cymone (program director) • Matt • Will • Kate • Kristen 	<p>What role does each person play?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead • Support • Support • Support • Support 	<p>What resources are needed (e.g., trainings, materials)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banners • Posters • T-shirts • Patches 	<p>On what dates was the strategy designed and executed?</p>	<p>What is the status? (M = met, NM = not met, IP = in progress)</p>	<p>By Nov.</p> <p>M</p> <p>NM</p> <p>IP</p>	<p>By Feb.</p> <p>M</p> <p>NM</p> <p>IP</p>	<p>By May</p> <p>M</p> <p>NM</p> <p>IP</p>	
<p>2. Every staff member will facilitate at least two team-building activities with youth per week in their program area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of team-building activities completed • # of youth participants in team-building activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cymone (program director) • Matt • Will • Kate • Kristen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead • Support • Support • Support • Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for staff on team- or community-building activities • YDToolbox mobile app 	<p>Aug. 1-May 25</p>	<p>June 1</p>	<p>June 1</p>	<p>M</p> <p>NM</p> <p>IP</p>	<p>M</p> <p>NM</p> <p>IP</p>	<p>M</p> <p>NM</p> <p>IP</p>

Targeted Program Plan Template



Program Name:

Staff Member Name:

Core Program Area:

- Leadership and Service
- Education
- The Arts
- Health and Wellness
- Sports and Recreation

Priority Outcome Area:

- Academic Success
- Good Character and Citizenship
- Healthy Lifestyles

Description:

What is the purpose of the program?
What will members experience?

Target Audience:

What is the age group and optimal group size?

Time Needed:

What is the duration of the entire program? How many sessions?
How long is each session?

Required Resources:

What space, staffing, materials, equipment, etc., are needed?

Expected Outcomes:

How will participants benefit or what knowledge, attitudes or skills will they build as a result of participating in the program?

Success Measures:

What will you collect data on or track to ensure the program worked? What will you use to gather the data?

Staff Signature:

Date:

Supervisor Signature:

Date:

Comments:



Sample Targeted Program Plan

Program Name:

Instructional Chess Program

Staff Member Name:

Brian Smith

Core Program Area:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership and Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Wellness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sports and Recreation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Arts | |

Priority Outcome Area:

- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Success |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good Character and Citizenship |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Healthy Lifestyles |

Description:

What is the purpose of the program?
What will members experience?

The instructional chess program is designed to introduce new players to chess. Players will learn the names and movement of all pieces, the rules of the game, and how to record their moves using chess notation. They will be introduced to the Swiss matching system of tournament play. The program will conclude with an in-house tournament, and all participants will be invited to join the Club's chess team.

Target Audience:

What is the age group and optimal group size?

15 Club members ages 8 to 12

Time Needed:

What is the duration of the entire program? How many sessions?
How long is each session?

Program runs for 12 weeks. Weekly instructional meetings for one hour, followed by individual practice games.

Required Resources:

What space, staffing, materials, equipment, etc., are needed?

Meeting space; one staff member to lead the program; chess boards and playing pieces, chess clocks, chess notation forms, class syllabus; and members up to 12 years old.

Expected Outcomes:

How will participants benefit or what knowledge, attitudes or skills will they build as a result of participating in the program?

1. Participants acquire a basic understanding of a game that may become a lifelong interest or pastime. (Skills to include post-test-rules, playing etiquette, tournament behavior and procedures, notation, use of clock, etc.).
2. Participants improve their ability to concentrate and think analytically. (Participants will record their moves so their strategy can be observed).

Success Measures:

What will you collect data on or track to ensure the program worked? What will you use to gather the data?

1. Number of participants who complete the 12-week instructional program (tracked via program sign-in sheets).
2. Number of participants who win or draw three games or more (tracked via chess program bulletin board).

Staff Signature:

Brian Smith Date: 3/30/18

Supervisor Signature:

Jane Black Date: 4/13/18

Comments:

Brian, thanks for submitting such a detailed and well-thought-out plan! The outcomes and success measures are logical and achievable. Approved. Let's talk about when you want to run it, ordering the supplies, and how you are going to promote it and recruit participants.

Glossary of Terms

Academic Success	One of three priority outcome areas of the Formula for Impact theory of change: Graduate on time, motivated to learn, with a plan to succeed in today's modern workforce
activity	The smallest building block of Club programming; a single event of limited duration; has some kind of objective
annual calendar	Notes days when there is special scheduling at the Club or Youth Center so families and staff can plan in advance (e.g., school early release days and breaks; days the site is closed for staff training, holidays or facility maintenance; and special events). From a planning perspective, it should reflect Club or Youth Center goals and help identify constraints. See also <u>seasonal schedule</u> .
annual visits	The number of visits per registered member on an annual basis
attention getter	A phrase, chant or gesture that can be used throughout a session to get the group's attention in a respectful and engaging way
average daily attendance (ADA)	The average number of registered members per day participating in on-site or off-site Club programs and activities
BLUEprint	A component of the Program Basics Suite, this definitive guide for high-quality Club or Youth Center programming reviews key aspects of Boys & Girls Club history and culture, and offers tips for putting sound youth development and program planning, delivery and assessment principles into practice
career exploration	Activities that motivate and inspire youth to think about the connection between their post-secondary plans and careers
character	<p>The way one behaves when no one is looking. In Clubs and Youth Centers, six essential traits or pillars define character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring • Citizenship • Fairness • Respect • Responsibility • Trustworthiness <p>The pillars of character were defined by CHARACTER COUNTS!</p>
character development	Opportunities across the Club day to practice skills that build good character during structured and less-structured times
Closing and Transition	The seventh and final of the Elements of a High-Quality Session; staff engage youth in putting away materials, creating a tidy space, and clearly explaining what youth can expect as they move on to the next program offering
cognitive	Relating to conscious intellectual activity, such as thinking, reasoning or remembering
communication	Exchanging thoughts, both verbally and non-verbally, and listening well to others

Community Builder	The second of the Elements of a High-Quality Session; an activity, such as an ice breaker or team-building exercise, that builds trust and supportive relationships among youth and staff through play, fun and active engagement
conflict management	Developing solutions to overcome conflict
conflict resolution	Responding to conflict
continuous quality improvement (CQI)	A way of thinking and learning, and a cyclical, ongoing process with three phases – assess, plan and improve – that helps enhance program quality and boost positive outcomes for youth
Core Beliefs	Statements reflecting the values and essential features of all Boys & Girls Clubs
Core Program Area	<p>A grouping or category of programs designed to achieve specific outcomes related to a common discipline. These categories, which fit into and align with the three priority outcome areas of the Formula for Impact, are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and Service • Education • The Arts • Health and Wellness • Sports and Recreation
developmentally appropriate	Describes programs and activities whose content and delivery methods are suitable for or match with the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive characteristics of the age group participating in the program or activity
Elements of a High-Quality Session	<p>Used to structure Targeted Program sessions and High-Yield Activities to ensure the consistent implementation of high-quality youth development practices. They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm Welcome • Community Builder • Group Agreements • Main Activity • Reflection • Recognition • Closing and Transition <p>These elements align with the David P. Weikart Center’s Youth Program Quality Intervention.</p>
emotional safety	When youth experience an inclusive place that is free of judgment or bullying, they feel free to express their emotions, feel secure and confident to take risks, and feel challenged and excited to try something new
empathy	Ability to understand and share in others’ feelings
ethical responsibility	Constructive decisions made based on ethics
evaluating	Process used to make informed decisions and identify appropriate options
encouragement	When recognizing a young person, specific, nonjudgmental observations of their effort are provided (e.g., “John, I noticed that when you were frustrated during the activity, you took the breaks you needed to complete the task. This really made a difference in your group finishing the activity.”) Use encouragement rather than praise, which is making general, nonspecific statements based on your judgment of their actions. (e.g., “John, you did great in the activity.”)

Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development

These are a critical component of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience, lay the foundation for implementing effective Targeted Programs and High-Yield Activities, and are how Club and Youth Center staff accomplish their core youth development work. They are:

1. Safe, positive environment
2. Fun and sense of belonging
3. Supportive relationships with peers and adults
4. Opportunities and expectations
5. Recognition

fixed (mandatory)

A type of program schedule in which program offerings are limited by members' ages, the programmatic philosophy of the Club or Youth Center, or other constraints, forcing youth to participate in new experiences or programs they need

Formula for Impact theory of change

A theory of change defines all the building blocks required to bring about a long-term goal or goals; creates a commonly understood vision, how the goals will be achieved, and how to measure progress.

The Boys & Girls Club Movement's theory of change, called the Formula for Impact, states: "If we take the Young People Who Need Us Most and provide them with the best possible Outcome-Driven Club Experience, they will achieve positive outcomes that will enable them to be Academically Successful, demonstrate Good Character and Citizenship, and live Healthy Lifestyles."

free choice (voluntary)

A type of program schedule that allows members to freely select the programs and activities they will participate in, so they can exercise autonomy and independence

goal-setting

Setting and working toward personal goals

Good Character and Citizenship

One of three priority outcome areas of the Formula for Impact theory of change: Develop strong character and take actions that make a difference in the community

Group Agreement

The third of the Elements of a High-Quality Session; a process of working with a group of youth to establish the agreed-upon behaviors that will promote physical and emotional safety for everyone in the group

grouper

A quick activity to divide a large group of participants into multiple small groups

Healthy Lifestyles

One of three priority outcome areas of the Formula for Impact theory of change: Make healthy lifestyle decisions resulting in social, emotional and physical well-being

High-Yield Activity

A component of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience, High-Yield Activities provide youth with enjoyable experiences that are hands-on, interactive, intentionally develop and reinforce the core skills explicitly taught through Targeted Programs, and help them achieve positive outcomes in the three priority outcome areas of the Formula for Impact

homegrown programs

Programs that are developed by local Clubs or Youth Centers

homeroom	Designated times of the Club or Youth Center day where youth of the same age group or interest come together to build community and regroup
identify and solve problems	Decision-making process
identifying emotions	Expressing feelings
impulse control	Controlling one's desire to react immediately
inclusive	Safe, positive and inclusive environments for youth of every race, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic status, religion and cultural belief
inclusion standards	Standards BGCA has developed to make sure all youth: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel represented • Have a sense of belonging • Can meaningfully participate in programming
individual or one-on-one mentoring activity	A type of interaction or program delivery method used by staff with youth; consists of pairing each young person with a caring adult for learning experiences; see also <u>small-group activity</u> and <u>large-group activity</u>
intentional	To do something on purpose or to be deliberate to create meaningful experiences for youth
interest-based programs	Programs that tap into youth interests, passions and enthusiasm
large-group activity	A type of interaction or program delivery method used by staff with youth; such activities informally engage youth and provide them with opportunities for maximum freedom and mobility; sometimes also referred to as drop-in activities; see also <u>small-group activity</u> and <u>individual or one-on-one mentoring activity</u>
less-structured time	Time during the program day when there are no formal instructional programs or activities (e.g., snack time, transitions, and when using the gamesroom for arrival and pick-up). See also <u>structured time</u> .
limits	The guidelines set up in a particular program space that define the parameters for specific activities (e.g., the time young people have at different activity stations, or the types of materials that can be used at different activity stations)
Main Activity	The fourth of the Elements of a High-Quality Session; the core content of a session, designed to help participants achieve the objective of the session through hands-on, interactive activities in which youth work together with materials to explore new concepts or learn or practice a new skill
Movement/Boys & Girls Club Movement	Refers to all local Boys & Girls Club organizations that are members of our federation, including their sites; plus BGCA, the national organization

National Youth Outcomes Initiative (NYOI)	A common system for Clubs to measure the Formula for Impact’s desired outcomes for young people and their perception of the Club Experience. NYOI’s primary data collection tool is a survey of youth ages 9 and older. The system also collects membership, attendance and staff survey data.
needs-based programs	Programs that address the needs of youth in the context of their community
open-ended question	A type of question that does not have a single right answer, giving young people opportunities to provide a variety of possible answers. This type of question encourages self-reflection and self-directed learning. See also Reflection .
Outcome-Driven Club Experience	<p>A Club Experience that provides enriching programs; fun, new experiences; and supportive relationships with caring adults and peers to help youth achieve positive outcomes in Academic Success, Good Character and Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles. It connects children and teens to their Club or Youth Center, and assures they will participate often and stay engaged through high school. Four components are needed to create an Outcome-Driven Club Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development • Targeted Programs • High-Yield Activities • Regular Attendance
output	Results of work activities that are quantifiable and can be easily tracked and documented (e.g., the number or percentage of youth who complete a particular program, the average daily attendance or the number of teen members at a site)
overall program	Encompasses the entire range of activities, programs and services, including transition times, available during a Club day; sometimes also referred to as programming
perseverance	Strength to keep going, even when something’s difficult
perspective-taking	Considering another’s point of view
physical safety	Youth are protected from physical harm when the Club or Youth Center controls recognized hazards and proactively addresses internal and external threats
positive youth development	<p>An intentional, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes and enhances young people’s strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.</p> <p>Definition developed by the federal Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs.</p>
priority outcome areas	The Formula for Impact theory of change guides Clubs and Youth Centers in how to help youth achieve positive outcomes in three priority areas: Academic Success, Good Character and Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles
program	The main method to help youth build and reinforce knowledge and skills; it has goals and objectives, follows a sequence of sessions or lessons, and is conducted over a specific period of time. Sometimes also referred to as a curriculum. See also Targeted Programs .

progressive programming	Programs and activities that evolve along with young people as they get older to keep them engaged and challenged and continue building on their existing knowledge or skills
prosocial	Behavior that is positive, helpful, and intended to promote social interactions and build good character to support the development of positive relationships
Pulse Check	A way of collecting just-in-time data (via survey, poll or focus group) to gain insight into young people's Club Experience
Recognition	The sixth of the Elements of a High-Quality Session; staff acknowledge young people's innate strengths and talents. Through authentic gestures and encouragement, staff positively reinforce members' efforts and persistence, and celebrate their progress and successes. Staff also create opportunities for youth to recognize each other. Can be informal (in-the-moment, verbal acknowledgment of effort and contribution) and formal (certificates or title designations like Youth of the Week/Month/Year).
recognizing strengths	Identifying what one can do well and building on those skills
Reflection	The fifth of the Elements of a High-Quality Session; a method that helps youth make meaning out of and express what they have learned, and identify how they can apply it in other areas of their lives. See also open-ended question .
Regular Attendance	A component of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience; the frequency with which youth attend their Club or Youth Center. Research shows youth are more likely to achieve positive outcomes when they attend more frequently. Regular Attendance is commonly measured by the number of annual visits, average daily attendance and member retention/renewal.
retention/renewal	The number of current registered members in a given year who renew their membership within a 12-month period after the expiration of their previous membership
rolling arrival	A block of time at the beginning of the Club daily schedule allowing for simple activities youth can easily join, even if they arrive at different times
safe, positive environment	A Club or Youth Center with a climate in which young people feel physically and emotionally safe, are able to form healthy relationships with staff and peers, and are able to engage fully in programs and activities
seasonal schedule	An eight- to 12-week Club or Youth Center program schedule that incorporates annual calendar events and constraints. It shows how the overall program is structured, including the Targeted Programs offered in each of the five Core Program Areas for designated age groups, and recurring features such as snack or meal times and youth meeting times. See also annual calendar and site weekly schedule .
self-awareness	Recognizing one's feelings, needs, thoughts and influence on behavior
self-efficacy	Perceived capability to do a specific task

sense of belonging	Youth experience a family-like environment, a home away from home, a community that is grounded in a shared identity, and the common goals of succeeding and giving feedback. They know they are welcome and feel they fit in and are accepted.
sequential	A series of sessions or lessons facilitated in a certain order to build participants' knowledge or skills
session	All the activities that occur during a standard block of time in the Club program schedule and in a particular space; one full meeting in a sequence of meetings that makes up a Targeted Program; sometimes also referred to as lessons
site weekly schedule	Derived from the seasonal schedule, this schedule shows which Club or Youth Center rooms are being used for each program session/lesson or activity during each time slot. It is limited to one five- to seven-day period and provides specific details about each of the program sessions/lessons or activities offered. See also <u>seasonal schedule</u> .
small-group activity	A type of interaction or program delivery method used by staff with youth; typically made up of eight to 12 youth who meet regularly with an adult leader for a specific program; see also <u>large-group activity</u> and <u>individual or one-on-one mentoring activity</u>
SMART	A format for writing goals, objectives or action steps so that they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific • Measurable • Attainable • Realistic • Time-Bound
social awareness	Ability to understand social and ethical norms of behavior
social-emotional skills	Skills related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How youth feel about themselves • Their relationships with others • Their ability to regulate emotions • Their ability to solve problems <p>Examples are teamwork, conflict management and ethical responsibility.</p>
special event	Another building block of the overall program; they boost fun, excitement and interest for staff, volunteers, youth, families and partners through celebrations, recognition events, youth performances, family nights or dinners, field trips and other special activities
staff-to-youth ratio	The number of supervising adult staff members compared with the number of youth in a program; for example, 1:10 means that for every 10 youth, there is one supervising adult staff member

strength-based approach	A perspective that emphasizes the strengths of young people rather than deficits; its goal is to build young people's resiliency and their belief that they can be successful. Staff focus on building up the positive, rather than preventing the negative, by identifying what youth do well, finding ways for youth to do more of it, and building upon those skills.
stress management	Responding to stress
structured time	Time in the Club or Youth Center in which more formal, instructional program sessions or activities are facilitated to build and reinforce young people's knowledge and skills; see also <u>less-structured time</u>
supportive relationships	Staff members proactively cultivate and maintain personal relationships to ensure every young person feels connected to one or more adult staff and forges friendships with peers. This includes staff-to-staff, staff-to-youth and youth-to-youth interactions.
Targeted Programs	<p>A component of the Outcome-Driven Club Experience, Targeted Programs are sequenced learning experiences with specific objectives for building skills and knowledge through five Core Program Areas. They are chosen to help Club youth achieve positive outcomes in one or more of our three priority outcome areas. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are planned • Are designed to achieve stated goals and objectives in a Core Program Area • Are designed to build upon existing knowledge and skills • Are conducted for a specific audience • Are sequenced, conducted over a specific period of time, using multiple lessons in a certain order • Use specific delivery methods • Measure and evaluate the extent to which participants achieve goals and objectives
teachable moment	When a young person spontaneously expresses a particular question, interest, observation, or concern to a staff member or volunteer that leads to further exploration of and guidance on that subject
teamwork	Working well with others
transition	Less-structured time spent moving from program to program, loading the bus, to snack or meal times, etc.
Warm Welcome	The first of the Elements of a High-Quality Session; staff greet each young person by name, thank them for being present, and engage them in meaningful conversations
youth-centered approach	An approach to building positive, meaningful relationships with young people by working in active partnership with them to shape the direction of and deliver program offerings. The goal is to instill in youth a sense of influence and autonomy.
youth development professional	Staff working directly with youth and responsible for overseeing the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of a broad range of programs within a designated Club.

Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA)

A tested, research-based observational assessment tool used to strengthen youth development practices and improve program quality for out-of-school-time providers.

The tool was developed by the David P. Weikart Center.

youth voice

The ideas, opinions and actions of young people. Youth voice may be thought of as a ladder with four rungs: no voice, input, choice and shared leadership. The ladder illustrates a range of enabling youth voice, from not enabling it at all to full partnership with shared leadership.

Youth Work Methods

Skills used to improve the quality of staff interactions with youth and promote physical and emotional safety of youth in out-of-school-time environments, including:

- Active-participatory approach
- Structure and clear limits
- Building community
- Ask-listen-encourage
- Reframing conflict

The methods were developed by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality.

Endnotes

- 1 The Six Pillars of Character are from CHARACTER COUNTS! These were identified by a nonpartisan, nonsectarian (secular) group of youth development experts in 1992 as “core ethical values that transcend cultural, religious and socioeconomic differences.” charactercounts.org/program-overview/six-pillars.
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- 11 Adapted with permission from RULER Resource Materials. Copyright ©2013-19 Yale University. All rights reserved. Please visit ei.yale.edu for more information.
- 12 David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality (2013). “Ask-Listen-Encourage Youth Work Method,” cypq.org/products_and_services/training/YWM.
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- 15 Boys & Girls Clubs of America gratefully acknowledges Brittany Hite, M.A., a doctoral student in Positive Developmental Psychology at Claremont Graduate University and a project manager at Claremont Evaluation Center, [linkedin.com/in/brittany-hite-99212584](https://www.linkedin.com/in/brittany-hite-99212584). Brittany collaborated with us to update and revise the content on the developmental milestones of children and teens. We greatly appreciate her contribution. Key sources consulted in our literature review included: Santrock, J. (2016), *Essentials of Life-Span Development*, Fourth Edition (Columbus, Ohio: McGraw-Hill Education); Nakkula, M. and Toshalis, E. (2008), *Understanding Youth: Adolescent Development for Educators* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Publishing Group); and Way, N. (2013), *Deep Secrets: Boys’ Friendships and the Crisis of Connection* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press).
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