



# The Youth Program Quality Initiative

Over 40 youth serving organizations have been part of Greater Victoria YPQI since 2012.

The Youth Program Quality Initiative (YPQI) is a community-based initiative that promotes a standardized evaluation process to create high-quality environments in which youth can learn and thrive.

Health and well-being during adolescence are powerful predictors of success in adulthood.<sup>1</sup>

We know that participation in high-quality out of school time (OST) programs can positively influence outcomes for youth.<sup>2</sup>

Participating youth serving organizations follow the YPQI cycle of "assess, plan, build skills, and improve" and attend monthly professional development opportunities for youth workers. In this way, the YPQI provides organizations and their staff with a community of practice, the know-how and skills to enrich the lives of young people right now.

By creating environments that best engage and include young people, we are increasing their health, well-being, and chance for success in life.



Substantial research confirms that high-quality out of school time (OST) programs positively impact social skill development, academic achievement, and risk reduction for the youth they serve. Trained and skilled staff are essential to creating safe, engaging, interactive, and youth-centered programs.<sup>3</sup>

## Youth Program Quality Assessment

Through the use of the Youth PQA, the YPQI provides a built-in evaluation of OST program delivery and management.

The Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA) is a validated instrument that measures youth access to key developmental experiences. It produces scores that organizations use to make improvements to their youth programming, and enables organizations to compare and assess their progress over time.

The YPQI pyramid below is about youth motivation to engage in an OST program. In order to create conditions for youth motivation, their need for safety, belonging, and self-esteem must be met first. Most youth programs tend to score high marks for safety and achieve progressively lower scores as one moves up the pyramid. But **engagement and interaction are the most important indicators of quality**: the youth programs with high engagement and interaction scores are among the highest rated by youth. In addition, the presence of youth voice—structures that involve young people in running the organizations that serve them—is the highest predictor of youth motivation.



## For More Information

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<http://www.communitycouncil.ca/YPQI>

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<sup>1</sup> McNeely, C. & Blanchard, J. (2009). The teen years explained: A guide to healthy adolescent development. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, <http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/center-for-adolescent-health/>

<sup>2</sup> Vandell, D. (2007). Outcomes linked to high quality afterschool programs: Longitudinal findings from the study of promising afterschool programs. University of California, <http://www.most.ie/webreports/NDLHIIIPromisingPracticesReportfinal.pdf/>

<sup>3</sup> Akiva, T. et al. (2011). Staff Instructional Practices, Youth Engagement, and Belonging in OST Programs. University of Michigan and Weikart Center, [http://www.cypq.org/sites/cypq.org/files/Akiva\\_AERA\\_3-16-11.pdf/](http://www.cypq.org/sites/cypq.org/files/Akiva_AERA_3-16-11.pdf/)