



Positive Learning Environment Observation Checklist

This checklist includes indicators of a positive learning environment across six program components: safety, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning, student engagement, staff interactions, and family and community engagement. You and your staff may use the checklist “as is” or customize it by adding target indicators of a positive learning environment that reflect your desired program culture and climate. The checklist can then be used as an observation tool to help identify challenges and areas of strength, reflect on findings, and set priorities as you seek to create a safe, supportive, welcoming space.

Site or Center: _____ Date: _____ Observer: _____

Time period/activity(ies) observed: _____
(e.g., full afternoon session; first hour of program session; second of six weekly STEM activity sessions)

Observation Checklist

For each indicator, rate the extent to which it’s evident on a scale of 1 (*Low*) to 3 (*High*). Use the Notes column to record details or ideas you’d like to discuss with others on your program team.

| Program Component | Indicator | Notes on Rating Chosen | Rating 1=Low 2=Medium 3=High |
|-------------------|--|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Safety | Description: Indicators for this component pertain to physical, social and emotional security. | | |
| | <i>Security procedures are implemented (e.g., securing entrances and exits, identifying visitors, taking attendance, monitoring student movement).</i> | | |
| | <i>Program areas meet internal student-to-adult ratio goals.</i> | | |
| | <i>Expectations for student behavior and social interactions are clearly communicated orally as well as visually where all students can see them (e.g., posted anchor charts, rules or site guidelines).</i> | | |
| | <i>The environment appears safe and comfortable, with appropriate noise levels in each area.</i> | | |



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|------------------------------------|---|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | <i>Students are included in program activities and are safe from verbal abuse and bullying from other students and/or adults.</i> | | |
| | <i>There are no visible safety hazards (e.g., unsecured rugs, cords or other tripping hazards, broken outlets).</i> | | |
| Interpersonal Relationships | Description: Indicators for this component pertain to interactions between and among students and adults. | | |
| | <i>Mutual respect is demonstrated for diverse needs and individual differences (e.g., gender, race, culture, ability).</i> | | |
| | <i>A staff member personally greets each student at the door each day.</i> | | |
| | <i>Interactions among and between students and adults appear to be positive.</i> | | |
| | <i>Site staff have high expectations for students' success, seem willing to listen to students and get to know them as individuals, and exhibit concern for students' challenges.</i> | | |
| | <i>Student-to-student relationships demonstrate friendships, teamwork and positive one-on-one interactions.</i> | | |
| Teaching and Learning | Description: Indicators for this component pertain to ensuring that the physical environment and activities are conducive to learning. | | |
| | <i>The program area is clean, organized, and has adequate resources and materials.</i> | | |



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| | <i>Program activities support student character building and development skills (e.g., effective listening, conflict resolution, self-reflection, emotional regulation, empathy, personal responsibility, ethical decision making).</i> | | |
| | <i>Activities reflect alignment to the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of students.</i> | | |
| | <i>Activities include enrichment experiences to help support program goals.</i> | | |
| | <i>Program staff regularly conduct assessments to ensure that necessary elements are in place to run the program effectively (e.g., barriers to effectiveness identified, staff training or curriculum in place, necessary tools and equipment present and in working condition).</i> | | |
| | <i>Program facilitators invite students to explore and share problem-solving strategies (e.g., posing challenges that interest students, asking probing questions, demonstrating enthusiasm for active participation, affirming student effort).</i> | | |
| | <i>Program facilitators help students make connections between program activities and students' prior knowledge.</i> | | |
| | <i>Program staff use teaching practices that include at least some of the following: encouragement and constructive feedback, opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills, independent thinking, inquiry and dialogue.</i> | | |
| Student Engagement | Description: Indicators for this component pertain to ensuring that students are invested in formal and informal program activities. | | |





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|---------------------------|---|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | <i>The program creates opportunities to acknowledge student achievements, contributions and responsibilities (e.g., group presentations, reflections, exhibitions, performances, celebrations).</i> | | |
| | <i>Students receive individual rewards, positive feedback, or verbal recognition for good behavior and/or successes.</i> | | |
| | <i>Students have formal and informal opportunities to identify and express their emotions; as needed, they have opportunities to step away and process emotions before they re-engage.</i> | | |
| | <i>Students consistently have opportunities to explain their perspectives.</i> | | |
| | <i>Students have appropriate voice and choice in selecting and participating in activities.</i> | | |
| | <i>Students regularly have opportunities to voice their concerns and to provide input on program improvement efforts.</i> | | |
| Staff Interactions | Description: Indicators for this component pertain to program team interactions and improvement efforts in building a positive program environment. | | |
| | <i>Staff members model positive interactions and respectful behavior with each other and with students.</i> | | |
| | <i>Efforts to improve the program climate are discussed during regularly scheduled staff meetings and implemented as agreed.</i> | | |
| | <i>Staff members help to identify professional learning needs around creating a positive learning environment and attend professional learning events.</i> | | |





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|--|--|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | <i>Program leaders offer staff professional learning opportunities relevant to their duties.</i> | | |
| | <i>Staff members actively engage with youth and attempt to nurture a strong sense of community in the program.</i> | | |
| Family and Community Engagement | Description: Indicators for this component pertain to ensuring that family and community members are invested in formal and informal program activities. | | |
| | <i>Program documentation and/or observation indicates that families and community members demonstrate they identify with the program (e.g., by using terms like “us” and “we” when referring to the program, by showing pride in being part of the program).</i> | | |
| | <i>Program documentation and/or observation indicates that families and community members show support for the program (e.g., by attending program events, sharing program information within the local community, participating in group activities, providing suggestions to program staff, leading program activities).</i> | | |
| | <i>Program documentation and/or observation indicates that families, community members and other stakeholders are invited to attend meetings to discuss partnership collaborations and program improvements.</i> | | |

