Quality Matters in 4-H

Structure and Planning

Learn. Grow. Lead.

Quality Matters in 4-H

Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) Items: Safe Environment and Supportive Environment

University of Missouri Extension and the 4-H Center for Youth Development have adapted this publication with permission from University of Minnesota Extension.

Missouri 4-H Center for Youth Development
1110 S. College Avenue
Columbia, MO 65211-3410
4h.missouri.edu

University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development delivers education, training and professional development for adults who work with and on behalf of young people. Since 2000, the Extension Center for Youth Development has provided the latest youth development research and taught youth workers throughout Minnesota how to apply it in their work. The Extension Center for Youth Development is committed to expanding the knowledge and strengthening the practices of staff and volunteers who are committed to high-quality youth development experiences for young people.

Attachments and resources

In addition to the staff meeting and training activities included in the Structure and Planning Toolkit, the Extension Center for Youth Development has provided the following attachments and resources:

- "How to Build Routines and Structure," and "Planning and Reflection Ideas"— excerpts from HighScope's Youth Work Methods Series by Tom Akiva.
- "Activity Brainstorm," "Sample Daily Schedule," "Sample Weekly Schedule," "Sample Monthly Schedule" and "Sample Activity Map" — adapted from After-School Program Basics by Deborah Moore.
- Activity Planner Template.
- Gisela Konopka's Eight Basic Youth Needs — excerpts from Youth Work Matters series, YWI.

Structure and Planning

Staff Meeting and Training Activities
YPQA Items: Safe Environment and Supportive Environment

While some level of flexibility and responsiveness are vital elements for programs to have, research supports the importance of strong and clear structure in delivering quality programs. There are two types of structure in any program: the *personal (soft) structure* that includes behavioral expectations and limits, and the *program (hard) structure* that includes established rituals and routines.

Behavioral expectations and limits must be clearly defined, communicated and owned to set a structural foundation for positive community, trust-building and relationship development. The most powerful and effective way to do this is with input and voice from participants. This structure must be communicated throughout the program — posted on walls, published in family communications and re-visited publicly and often.

A quality program structure intentionally builds the following rituals and routines into the overall session, as well as into individual daily activities:

- Opportunities to participate in activities as a large group, in smaller groups and individually.

- Getting-to-know you games and icebreakers — for "beginning" routines.

- A "menu" of activities — building in opportunities for content choice — for "middle" routines.

YPQA Related Indicators: Safe Environment and Supportive Environment

- The emotional climate of the session is mostly positive.

- Session flow is planned, presented and paced for youths.

- Youths have structured opportunities to get to know each other.

- Session consists of activities carried out in at least three groupings — full, small or individual.

- Youths have opportunities to set goals and make plans.

- Youths have opportunities to make choices based on their interests.

- Youths have structured opportunities to give feedback on activities.

- Youths have opportunities to reflect.

YPQA Pyramid

Engagement

Interaction

Supportive Environment

Safe Environment
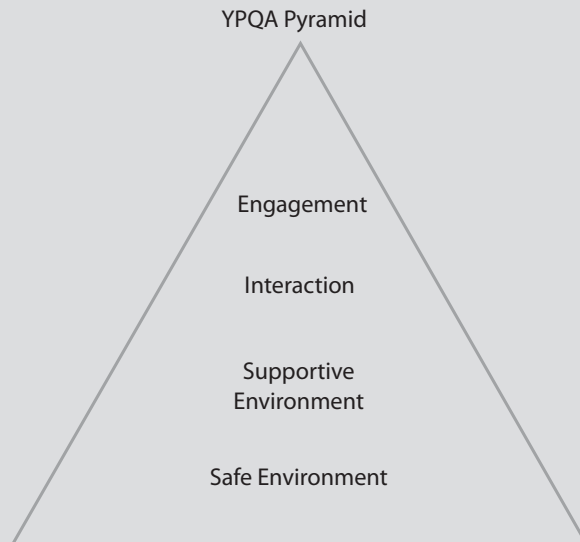
©David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

Staff Meeting and Training Activities
YPQA Items: Safe Environment and Supportive Environment (continued)

- Building process choice into each daily activity — letting youths choose how the activity will unfold — for "middle" routines.

- Including time and space for youths to reflect on what they've learned and on their growth, as well as on the activities they participated in — for "ending" routines.

According to HighScope, to provide a high-quality program, youth workers must intentionally plan the program to support positive youth development and include youths in planning activities. Yet it can be a challenge to allocate time and resources for planning.

A few key behaviors will help in planning and structuring:

- Dedicate staff time to planning.

- Create a system for ongoing planning and reflection.

- Involve youths in planning at both the program and activity level.

- Use a cycle of "plan — do — reflect," throughout program.

Basic Youth Needs is adapted from:

Konopka, G. (1973). Requirements for healthy development of adolescent youth. Adolescence 8(31), 2-25.

Pittman, K.J. and Wright, M. (1991). A rationale for enhancing the role of the non-school voluntary sector in youth development. (Commissioned for the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development.) Washington, D.C.: Center for Youth Development and Policy Research.

Structure Activity — 15 minutes

Instructions

Get participants in groups of two to three. Give each group a handful of toothpicks, marshmallows and some decorative material like glitter glue, construction paper and markers.

Ask each group to take five minutes to create something that will hold and support a tablet of sticky notes up and off the table.

After five minutes, walk around and see if creations will hold up the sticky notes off the table.

Reflection

Look around the room and ask for any commonalities in the structures (...all have a base of support or some foundation).

"Are there any differences in the structures?" (Likely, it will mostly be cosmetic and decorative differences.) "What are the 'structures' that exist in our program?"

"What are the 'decorative' pieces?" (activities, topics, events, things that change up more often)

When we are looking at building quality programs for youths, we need to make sure there is a structure that supports the young people. That structure should be consistent, grounded in research and changes should be intentional and planned.

Structure

Personal (Soft)	Program (Hard)
• Behavior	• Rituals
• Expectations	• Routines
• Limits	
• Norms	

> **"Measure twice, cut once."**
>
> **— Carpenters' saying**

Definitions — 10 minutes

Instructions

Write the words "Structure" and "Chaos" on flip chart paper. Begin by asking the participants to define these words:

Structure

Key words might include: schedule, comforting, support, routines, expectations, boundaries, behavior, physical space, activities, consistency, age-appropriate, rules

Chaos

Key words may include: loud, unorganized, dangerous, confusing, crazy

Provide the dictionary meanings for words:

Structure: the action of building; something arranged in a definite pattern of organization; coherent form or organization.

Chaos: a state of things in which chance is supreme; the inherent unpredictability in behavior; a state of utter confusion.

Discussion

Ask "Which word currently describes our program? Your daily activities? Which is preferable?"

Write the structure framework below on a flip chart. Explain that quality programs intentionally plan around both types of structure and that we know specific elements of structures that help build quality programs.

Behavior Expectations and Limits Activity — 30 minutes

Instructions

Split the group in half. Give each group one of the following statements:

1. Structure and limits inhibit creativity and should be limited.

2. Young people crave structure and clear limits.

Ask groups to come up with main points and arguments to support their position as stated.

Each group chooses a speaker. Group 1 speaker gets two minutes to make main points in front of the entire group. Group 2 speaker follows with two minutes of main points.

Speakers return to group and have three minutes to come up with a one-minute closing. Group 2 speaker goes first in large group followed by Group 2 speaker.

Discussion

Post three flip charts and write the words at the top: Freedom, Structure, Limits. Ask the following questions and pull out the key learnings as listed below.

- What did we hear that supported freedom? (note on flip chart)
- What did we hear that supported structure? (note on flip chart)

Key learning

There is a value in having the flexibility to explore — our job is to create structures and set limits that support that exploration and creativity.

Pull out the points from the sidebar if not mentioned.

- How do you define limits? What are some examples?

HighScope defines limits as the social norms that help us to know what kind of behavior is appropriate and respectful in a given place and situation. Examples include one person speaking at a time; put away all materials at the end of a session; everyone on the team gets to play; respectful challenge and mistakes are okay.

Reflection

Post and discuss these important things to remember about limits:

- Communicate limits early and often. (Where and how do we communicate?)
- Frame limits positively (Instead of "don't hit" what could we say? Instead of "no swearing"?)
- Be consistent. (What are some challenges with this?)
- Be firm but flexible.
- Use your bag o' tricks like the "getting-it-quiet-without-yelling" tricks. (Ask people to share.)
- Remember youth needs — (pass out Basic Youth Needs). (Are policies in place for the health and well-being of young people, or because it's convenient for adults?)

Why young people (secretly) crave structure and limits

Safety — Other kids won't beat me up or make fun of me. I can be safe there.

Predictability — I know what to expect and what's coming next.

Stability — It gives me something I can count on, even if everything else in my life feels out of control; I know what to expect and can prepare myself with it.

Productivity — things stay focused so we can do what we're supposed to be doing; we don't waste our time.

Comfort — the place and people are familiar and I know what I'm supposed to be doing and not doing; I'm not worried about getting in trouble for something I didn't know I wasn't supposed to do.

Exposure — I get to try new things I wouldn't know about otherwise

Engagement — I can try new things and show interest in something that might not be seen as "cool" without worrying if I'm going to lose face because I'm just "getting with the program."

Structure and Planning Activity — 1 hour

Setup

Create a flip chart with only the bold words from the box on page 8.

Create another large piece of paper or use a white board with the program planning template on it.

Group learning

Introduce the flip chart explaining that this is what we know about how structure can play a role in quality programming.

After reading the first line, ask staff what it means to them and what it might look like in action.

Continue on through the items stopping to discuss each one. What do or could these look like for our overall program as a whole? Fill out the program planning template.

Instructions

We just finished a planning process as an entire staff — looking at how to integrate best practices into our overall program structure. That's not quite enough however, since participants spend a lot of time in activities and offerings within that larger program structure.

We need to make sure these best practices become part of the culture of how we operate within shorter activity chunks as well. Staff need to be just as conscious of integrating these elements into the 1-hour content-based offerings.

Ask staff to consider a recent offering they have delivered — like a hoops and homework session, Zumba dance class or homework help. Take some time individually to fill out the Activity Planner on page 21. When completed, get in groups of two to three to share ideas.

Large group discussion

- Are there offerings and activities that were easy to integrate elements into?

- Were there activities that were particularly challenging? (Homework help? Basketball?) As a large group, brainstorm for these tough ones.

- How can we build a system that supports this kind of planning? What do you need as staff to make it work?

Overall program-wide planning			
	Current state	What it could be	What we need to do it
Pacing			
Choice			
Beginning			
Middle			
End			
Grouping			
Youth planning			
Delivery methods			
Staff planning			

You have a quality structure in place if...

- **Activities are paced for young people.**
  Activities are not too long to lose interest, and not too short to prevent engagement.

- **Choices, choices, choices**
  Young people get to choose what and how they experience information.

- **Beginning, middle, end**
  There is a clear beginning, middle and end to program and activities. Participants expect the rituals that are built into these times. Beginnings might include structured opening activities, large group games, check in about day, homework help, ice breaker. Middles are typically the content and activities that support the goals. Ends are reflection activities, productions or presentations, closings.

- **Youths have time in large groups, small groups and as individuals.**
  The overall daily program and each activity in intentional about mixing it up.

- **Youths have opportunities to plan and set goals.**
  Young people help plan for the larger overall program, as well as during the activities they participate in daily. Copy and distribute the Planning and Reflection Techniques beginning on page 12 for ways to integrate youth planning into routine.

- **Youths have opportunities for multiple ways to explore.**
  Programs don't get trapped in one delivery medium. There are opportunities for visual art activities, sports and recreation, outdoor adventure, academic assistance, music and drama, mental exploration, citizenship and service, cooking, construction and science or nature

- **Staff intentionally plan.**
  Staff are thoughtful about building each of the above elements into both the overall program and the individual daily activities or offerings.

Engage Youths

- Have participants help create rules and limits for the program.
- Do it every session — even though they might come up with the same rules, it gives an opporutnity for engagement, discussion, choice and creativity.
- Have them do an art project around the rules and clearly post in common space. Ask them to all sign it in agreement.
- Go back to the co-created rules when issues arise.

Basic Youth Needs

- Feel a sense of safety and structure
- Experience active participation, group membership and belonging
- Develop self-worth through meaningful contribution
- Experiment to discover self, gain independence and gain control over one's life
- Develop significant quality relationships with peers and at least one adult
- Discuss conflicting values and form their own
- Feel pride of competence and mastery
- Expand their capacity to enjoy life and know that success is possible

Basic Youth Needs adapted from:

Konopka, G. (1973). Requirements for healthy development of adolescent youth. Adolescence 8(31), 2-25.

Pittman, K.J. and Wright, M. (1991). A rationale for enhancing the role of the non-school voluntary sector in youth development. (Commissioned for the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development.) Washington, D.C.: Center for Youth Development and Policy Research.

Reinforce and Check the Learning

Very few of us hear something once and make the change immediately. Changing the way we plan is a fundamental shift in thinking about our work.

To create lasting change and support growth, we should build in regular opportunities to focus on the changes. Here are a few simple ways to follow up and engage staff in discussing and reflecting on how we plan and structure supports and opportunities for youths in programs.

- The most useful and important thing a leader can do is provide staff with time to plan. It is especially helpful if staff have time to plan in teams, as well as individually. Sharing the planning task and developing ideas together usually leads to a higher quality experience for staff and for youths.

- Periodically — perhaps monthly — call staff together to check in on structure and planning. Consider zeroing in on a particular upcoming event or a theme that staff will be focusing on in the near future.

- Use the Activity Map on page 23 to brainstorm ideas for a variety of activities that will engage youths in the topic at hand.

- Ask if anyone tried a new plan or a new approach to planning, that really seemed to work since your last meeting. It might help to start capturing a methods list of templates, tools and approaches that work well in your program.

- Plan a reflection session to focus on the benefits that have developed from improving planning and structure.

- Begin to collect completed activity plans and file them for future reference and sessions. You don't need to recreate the wheel once something has worked.

> **"Repetition is the mother of learning, the father of action and the architect of accomplishment."**
>
> **— Zig Ziglar**

Excerpts from HighScope's Youth Worker Methods Series by Tom Akiva.

How to Build Routines and Structure

Point of service: Routines for individual offerings

It's important for the staff person who leads each class or activity to have routines within that activity. These routines help staff organize their class in a consistent, predictable way. Again, this helps reduce chaos and dead time (and the negative behavior that can then result) and helps keep kids engaged while meeting multiple developmental needs. Following are a few examples:

Poetry class	Teens, 1-hour class
5 min.	Weather report (Go-around where each young person gives an update on how they're doing)
5 to 10 min.	Opening activity, energizer or icebreaker
30 min.	Writing activity for the day
10 min.	Read-around
5 to 10 min.	Reflections on the day, planning for next class

Basketball	1-hour session
5 min.	Free shoot around
10 min.	Stretching and overview of day's skill focus
15 min.	Skill-building activities and drills
25 min.	Games (teams play one another in mini-league)
5 min.	Cool down (Meet at center court and young people sit, then discuss of how skills were demonstrated or not demonstrated in games, and make plans for next session)

Art class	Elementary age, 1 hour, twice a week
5-10 min.	Gathering time and transitions
5 min.	Looking at and discussing examples of art
30 min.	Art activity
10 min.	Clean up

Excerpts from HighScope's Youth Worker Methods Series by Tom Akiva.

Program-wide: Guidelines for program schedules and structures

Because program schedules and routines are so important to developing a structure that supports positive youth development, we want to provide some specific guidelines for them. When putting a program schedule together, keep in mind a few things:

- Offer a wide range of program offerings

- Provide intentional learning opportunities (Youth PQA Item II-H, indicators 1-4)

- Provide healthy foods and drink (Youth PQA Item I-E, indicators 1-3)

- Structure an opening/gathering time (Youth PQA Item III-L, indicator 1)

- Include time for young people to plan (Youth PQA Item IV-P, indicators 1-2)

- Structure opportunities for choice (Youth PQA Item IV-Q, indicators 1-2)

- Include time for reflection (Youth PQA Item IV-R, indicators 1-4)

- Mix opportunities for small and large groups, as well as individual time (Youth PQA Item III-M, indicators 1-3)

The sample program schedule below is for middle school-aged young people. This example serves 35 young people and includes four staff persons, though not all four need to be there for the entire time. All young people begin the session together with snack time from 3:00-3:30. After that, young people select from a range of workshops or homework help. In this schedule, all young people could select homework help for one time block, while still choosing two other activities of interest to them.

The schedule shows how to support social, academic, recreational and creative development for young people and offer them a wide range from which to choose. Within each of these offerings, multiple needs can be addressed based on the structure of the specific offering.

Sample program schedule

Time	Media Center	Room A	Room B	Gym
3:00–3:30	Snack and hang out	——	——	——
3:30–4:15	Homework help	Step or dance	Photo workshop	Basketball (informal)
4:15–5:00	Homework help	——	Journalism workshop	Basketball workshop
5:00–5:45	Homework help	Young Engineers (building club)	Songwriting	World games
5:45–6:00	Daily reflection and closing activity	——	——	——

Excerpts from HighScope's Youth Worker Methods Series by Tom Akiva.

Planning and Reflection Techniques

The following pages list specific techniques for planning and reflection. The line after each technique's title indicates whether it's best for planning, reflection or both:

- **Planning —** Techniques to help young people make plans and set goals

- **Reflection —** Techniques to help young people make sense of what has occurred, make connections to past experiences and modify their understanding of concepts

A Rose and a Thorn
(Planning and Reflection)

Have participants write one "rose," or good thing that has happened for them, and one "thorn," or challenge. Next, have them share this in large or small groups. This can refer to time spent during activities or away.

For example, to start off the third session of a group that meets weekly, the adult leader may ask young people to say a rose and a thorn for the past week. One youth may say, "A rose was that I got an A on my math test. A thorn was that we lost the basketball game." Or at the end of the session, the adult could ask young people to say a rose and a thorn that occurred for them during the activity.

Backwards Planning
(Planning)

Young people begin by choosing the final outcome of a project or an activity. Using a timeline or other visual method, young people then work backward to outline all the necessary steps to reach that outcome. If done with index cards or sticky notes, participants can rearrange steps as they go (See Post-It® Planning).

For example, in a pottery workshop, a small group of young people may decide on a particular type of bowl they'd like to make. They write down "shiny purple soup bowl." Then, creating a reverse timeline, they write "glaze it, fire it, smooth all bumps away, create shape on wheel, center clump of clay on wheel, get clay." Once the timeline is in place, young people can begin carrying out the steps, starting at the beginning.

Bounce the Ball
(Reflection)

This is similar to the grade school game called Four Square. Use a ball, either a tennis ball or a larger, bouncy ball. Bounce the ball to a participant and say something that worked well in the session. Participants can answer more than once. After folks run out of things to say, you can add a new question. For example, first have youths say something they would change about the session. Once they run out of things to say, ask, "What will you do differently next time?", "What's something you are looking forward to?," "How will I use this outside of the group?" or "What will this mean for me in the future?"

Brainstorming
(Planning)

Youths list ideas or steps that are necessary to undertake a particular project or activity. It often works well to have one youth designated as recorder to write all the brainstormed ideas out on a board, big paper or letter paper. Make sure to establish the rules of brainstorming: no idea is a bad one and don't discuss the merits or details of any one idea — just get them listed as quickly as possible.

Bus Stop
(Planning and Reflection)

Post large sheets of paper around the room, each labeled with a specific statement identifying a particular issue. Ask youths to stand by the station they most closely identify with or are interested in. Have them spend some time discussing with others at their station, then facilitate a large group discussion.

For example, if using for planning, the specific stations might read, "My fears about this project," "My hopes for this project," "Things I want to make sure are included," and "Things I want to avoid in this project." An example for reflection might read, "What I will use in the future from this activity," "What I learned about myself in this activity," and "What I learned about others in this activity."

Excerpts from HighScope's Youth Worker Methods Series by Tom Akiva.

Circle Game
(Planning and Reflection)

Give everyone an index card and ask them to write down a question they have. This can be specific to an activity or general. Collect cards and place them in a pile. Have young people sit in a circle. Ask a volunteer to draw the first card. They then read the question aloud and try to answer it. If he or she does not know, or after the youth gives answer, you can open the question up to others in the group to answer.

For example, you might have young people write down questions they have about college, before taking them to visit a college campus. Or you might have young people write questions they have about the civil rights movement before beginning a section of study on this.

Comfort Zone
(Reflection)

This activity can be used to gauge comfort with content, process or other issues. Designate three zones in the room: one for "comfort," one for "stretching," and one for "overwhelmed." Typically this is done three areas along an imaginary spectrum line; one side of the room is comfort, the other side is overwhelmed and the middle is stretching. Or you could designate three rings: like a target with comfort as the bulls-eye (you can use masking tape for this, or if you're outside on asphalt, sidewalk chalk works well).

Read a series of reflection statements. For each statement, ask participants to place themselves in the zone that most closely matches their feeling about the statement. Silent reflection after each statement is often best, but asking volunteers to share why they moved where they did is sometimes appropriate. At some point during the activity (typically at the beginning or end), you might talk about how stretching is the zone in which the most learning occurs. You can't learn if you stay in a comfort zone, nor does learning occur when you feel overwhelmed.

Some example topics:

- "How do you feel about volunteering in the third grade classroom?"

- "Choose a zone to show how you rate your ability to use this new skill?"
- "How prepared do you feel for the upcoming open house?"

Concentric Circles
(Planning and Reflection)

Divide participants into two groups. Ask one group to become an inner circle and the other an outer circle. Members of the inner circle face outward while members of the outer circle face inward so that inner and outer circle members are facing each other. Make sure there are equal numbers in each group — if you have an even number of participants, everyone should be standing across from a partner; if you have an odd number, one can wait around or there can be a group of three. Pose a question for participants to ask or answer with the person facing them. When you call for the group to switch, the inner circle stays in place while the outer circle shifts one to the right. Each person should be facing a new partner. You can then pose a second question. The exercise continues for several rounds or until the original partners meet each other again.

Cross the Line
(Planning and Reflection)

Ask all participants to stand on one side of the room. Tell them you will read a series of statements. Once you read a statement, everyone for whom that statement is personally true walks to the other side of the room. Then begin. After the first statement, you may wish to use reflective prompts such as, "Notice who is on one side of the room and notice who is not." Participants silently acknowledge the configuration of the room's participants. Ask participants to rejoin the individuals who did not move. You can repeat the exercise with additional statements. This exercise can be used as a simple icebreaker, or as a way to inform the group about minority viewpoints and power dynamics.

Some examples:

- "Cross the line if you learned something from this activity."

- "Cross the line if you enjoyed this activity."

Excerpts from HighScope's Youth Worker Methods Series by Tom Akiva.

Planning and Reflection Techniques (continued)

- "Cross the line if you feel safe sharing your feelings in this group."

- "Cross the line if you would like to get to know people in this group better."

Digital Camera
(Planning)

Have young people, in small groups, take and print digital photographs as part of a planning exercise. They can then put together a collage, poster or timeline with the photographs. For example, if the full group is going to take part in a park clean-up project, a small group might go to the site and take several photos. They could then print them out and make a photo montage to show the full group before the project. Or they could bypass printing altogether and put together a photo slideshow on the computer.

Fishbowl
(Planning and Reflection)

Three to eight participants sit in a circle in the front of the classroom and discuss a particular topic. All other young people observe. A youth in the circle can exit the "fishbowl" whenever he or she desires. Observers can enter the circle when a space opens up. Adults can participate alongside young people in this exercise.

For example, you could set up a fishbowl discussion on bullying. Five participants, including Crystal, discuss for a few minutes. Then Andy, a youth who has been watching, taps Crystal on her shoulder. Crystal stands up and leaves the fishbowl, and Andy takes her chair. He then participates in the ongoing conversation.

Fishbowl topics of discussion can involve planning and reflection of projects or activities. A fishbowl can also be used to role-play scenarios (such as conflicts that may arise in a group), learn or practice skills or reflect on reading materials.

Forms
(Planning and Reflection)

Young people use prepared forms designed to help them plan the necessary steps to undertake a certain process. Forms can prompt young people to set goals and objectives, describe the materials they will use, list the steps they will follow and create a timeline for completing their activity. For example, a planning form might list project topic, goals, steps, desired outcomes and timeline.

Ghost Stone Reflection
(Reflection)

This activity is typically used as the final closing to a group that is ending a significant time together — for example, the last day of a weekend retreat or summer camp. Participants sit in a circle. Each participant is given a small stone (or uses one they were asked to choose and pick up earlier in the day). This stone represents the contributions that their presence provided to the group. As the facilitator, you can set the tone for a quiet, reflective experience. Tell participants that when each is ready, they can come up to the center one by one to reflect on how their presence added to the spirit of the group. They can say a few words, then leave the stone in the center of the circle as a reminder of their individual contributions to the group's efforts, which will remain with the group even after they are gone and the group's time together has ended. If you are running an outdoor or camp program, this exercise can be particularly effective with a campfire. Participants can place their stones in the fire.

Green Light, Yellow Light, Red Light
(Planning and Reflection)

Post a piece of large paper (easel paper works well) or use a whiteboard, and draw three columns labeled Green Light, Yellow Light and Red Light. In the Green Light column, participants list the things that they would like to start doing in the group. In the Yellow Light column, participants list the things that they would like to continue doing in the group (with or without modifications). In the Red Light column, participants list

Excerpts from HighScope's Youth Worker Methods Series by Tom Akiva.

all the things they would like to stop doing in the group. This can lead to a discussion about norms, decisions and, ultimately, a plan based on the lists they made.

Hopes and Fears
(Planning and Reflection)

Give participants two different colored note cards. On one note card, ask them to write down the hopes that they have for an activity, workshop or experience. On the other note card, have them write down the fears that they have. Collect the cards, then redistribute them so that each participant now has the card of another participant. This is so that specific hopes and fears are not attached to a particular person. Have each participant read aloud the hopes and fears written on his or her card. The group selects the themes heard among the hopes and fears expressed and discussed. Often, this activity is followed with the setting of group norms or guidelines. If this is used as a closing, take special care to resolve the fears expressed in the group or to create a plan for follow-up in the near future. This exercise could be used on the first day of an after school program, before a field trip or the last day of a peer counseling training workshop.

Interesting Objects
(Planning and Reflection)

Participants are asked to select an interesting item from a box of random materials. (These can be things you find around the house or at a dollar store, like a light bulb, a Frisbee, a child's toy or a gardening tool.) Once each participant selects an item that is interesting to him or her, ask that participant to share how that object represents some aspect of the workshop or program. In an opening activity, the object can represent something participants hope to receive from the session or workshop. In a closing, the object can represent something that they will hope to take away from the experience. For example, in the final reflection activity for a drama club, participants choose interesting items. Shannon shows the light bulb she selected and says, "This represents how this

club turned a light on for me." James then shows a plastic action figure and says, "This little guy represents me before the club started — he's really stiff and I was really stiff and scared to, you know, act in front of people. Now I'm not like him anymore. I'm not stiff."

Interviews
(Planning and Reflection)

Having young people interview each other can be effective in various ways and for various purposes. These can prove to be a valuable experience for both interviewers and interviewees. You might start by having the full group brainstorm interview questions. Then divide group participants into pairs. Give partners several minutes to conduct interviews with each other. At the end of the interviews, have each person present to the full group. You or other young people can pose questions to the youth presenting.

Some examples:

- As an opening, young people could interview peers they don't know, then introduce their partner to the group.

- For planning, you can have individuals or small groups interview each other about their plans for a project.

- For reflection, you can first have the full group generate sample questions, then pairs interview each other about what they learned from an experience.

Journal Writing[1]
(Planning and Reflection)

Young people make journal entries for planning or reflection. Journal writing can occur in a guided format, with questions posed at intervals by the trainer, or by asking young people to reflect on their experiences in journals. If appropriate, you can collect, read and make comments in young people's journals. Although some young people may wish to keep their writing private,

---

[1]There are numerous books and articles available on how to use journals effectively and how to respond effectively to youth's writing. One good collection of essays is T. Fulwiler. (1987). The Journal Book. Portsmouth, NJ: Boynton/ Cook. Another resource is this excellent article: Crone-Blevins, D.E. (2002). The art of response. English Journal: High school edition, 91(6), 93-98.

Excerpts from HighScope's Youth Worker Methods Series by Tom Akiva.

Planning and Reflection Techniques (continued)

most appreciate the attention of an adult responding to their writing. Journal writing can also be guided. Read a narrative or a series of questions out loud. Participants write in their journals at their own pace, responding as much or as little as they like to the narrative questions. For example, you can ask young people to reflect on and write about a recent service learning park clean-up project. As young people write, slowly ask questions: "How did it feel when we first arrived? What did you think when you saw the amount of work to do? What was hardest about getting started?"

K-W-L (Know; Want to Know; Learned)[2]
(Planning and Reflection)

The K-W-L strategy was originally developed to help young people with reading comprehension, but it has many applications. The technique uses a prepared form (or young people can make their own) with three columns, labeled: Know, Want to Know and Learned. Before reading a text, or having an experience, young people fill out the first two columns. After the text or experience, young people complete the third column. This can lead to a small or large group discussion, or it can remain an individual activity.

Lazy Susan
(Planning and Reflection)

Have young people write their name and a topic or question on an index card or sheet of paper. When they've done this, ask them to pass the cards in a particular direction and have the receivers brainstorm ideas on the topic written on their card. After a time, you might want to call for another switch. For example, you might have young people write a particular challenge they're experiencing in their lives. After everyone writes something, say, "Ok, now pass your cards two people to the right and list a positive way to deal with the problem

you read about. When you're finished, pass your card back to its original owner." The young people could then use the ideas listed on the card as a starting point for developing a plan for addressing the problem.

Learned So Far
(Planning and Reflection)

This follows the same basic structure as Hopes and Fears. Give participants two different colored index cards. On one card, ask them to write one thing they've learned. On the other card, they can write a question they (still) have. This can be done with a general statement, such as, "What you've learned in this after-school enrichment program," or more specifically, "What you've learned about viral diseases."

Letter to Myself
(Planning and Reflection)

Have young people write themselves a letter, reflecting on how they're feeling and what they're thinking about a particular experience. Have them address an envelope to themselves, insert their letter and seal the envelopes. At a later date (preferably after some time has passed, like after a month or a year), mail the letters. This works particularly well if young people have just completed a meaningful experience, such as a weekend retreat or service-learning project.

Matter of Opinion
(Reflection)

For this activity, designate corners of the room as: strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. You can do this with posters prepared beforehand. Read a statement and have young people move to a corner of the room that represents their interests or opinions about the topic or statement. Young people then discuss the topic with the like-minded young people in their corner. After

---

[2]A concise description of K-W-L and K-W-L Plus appears in Buehl, D. (2001). Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning, Second Edition. International Reading Association: Newark, Delaware. The strategy was originally presented in Ogle, D. (1986). K-W-L: A teaching model that develops active reading of expository text. The Reading Teacher, 39, 564-570.

Excerpts from HighScope's Youth Worker Methods Series by Tom Akiva.

some time, each corner can elect a representative to share with the full group what was discussed.

Some example topics:

- "I believe schools should require students to wear uniforms."
- "I support corporal punishment; I believe the death penalty is necessary in some circumstances."
- "I believe cats are better than dogs."

Mental Walkthrough
(Reflection)

This exercise is typically appropriate at or near the end of a workshop — or just after participants have learned a skill or had an experience. Ask participants to mentally walk through the steps or process of an experience, or the process of carrying out their new skill. You can have them do the mental walkthrough out loud, for the full group to hear. After the mental walkthroughs have been presented, you and other members of the group can clarify any remaining questions. For example, after time spent on the subject, you might ask young people to walk through the steps they would take in approaching a conflict situation. Lisa gets up and talks through how this might be done, providing the group with a mental visualization of what would take place. She and her peers then ask and answer questions about the process.

Mill to Music
(Planning and Reflection)

This is similar to the popular children's game Musical Chairs. Play music either with a musical instrument or recording (upbeat music without words tends to work well). While the music plays, have young people move around the room — they don't have to dance or even move to the beat; they simply mill about. When the music stops, ask them to form pairs with those to whom they're standing closest. Give young people a question to respond to with the person who is closest to them. Pairs take a few minutes to ask and answer the question to each other. Start the music again and participants mill again. You can repeat this through several rounds.

For example, play South American dance music and ask young people to mill about. After participants move around for several seconds, stop the music. Say, "Find a partner close to you." Once they have done this, say, "Ok, share with your partner what you did over the weekend." After a minute or two, play the music again and do the procedure again with a different question.

Mill to music questions can be general, like "How do you feel?" or specific, like "Tell your partner the steps you took to complete your project." Mill to music can work particularly well in combination with back-to-back, a grouping strategy.

Nails to Hang Your Thoughts On
(Reflection)

This exercise is very similar to Rotation Brainstorm, but participants move and respond individually rather than in groups. It's a particularly useful procedure to help young people think through planning and reflection topics. Post large sheets of paper around the room. On each one write a planning or reflection statement to complete, such as, "During today's session I learned to…" Have participants move around individually and complete each phrase. They can go in any order they wish, but have them try to write something on every sheet.

More example statements:

- "The first step I should take in the project is…"
- "The outcome of my project should be…"
- "Today I would have liked to learn more about…"
- "Something I would do differently next time is…"

Picture, Diagram or Collage
(Planning and Reflection)

Have young people create visual representations to depict what they will do, or did, in a particular project or activity.

Some planning examples:

- Before a gardening workshop, have young people go through gardening magazines and cut out pictures they like. They then assemble those pictures into a collage about how they may envision the garden they will help create.
- Have young people draw a diagram of a boat they will construct out of cardboard boxes, plastic bags and duct tape.

Excerpts from HighScope's Youth Worker Methods Series by Tom Akiva.

Planning and Reflection Techniques (continued)

Some reflection examples:

- Using watercolors, have young people draw abstract representations about how they felt about their mentoring projects at the elementary school.

- Have individuals draw symbolic representations of what they saw on the field trip and have peers guess what the pictures represent.

Postcards
(Reflection)

This activity is most appropriate at the end or during a day (or more), packed with activities and experiences. Ask young people to mentally review the activities and experiences of the day (or week). You may wish to lead them through a brief guided re-imaging of all of the activities completed (for example, "On Friday night we arrived and played Name and Motion. Then we had that campfire and many of you roasted marshmallows…)" Ask participants to take a mental snapshot of some experience they had during the sessions that they would send as a postcard to someone who was not there with them. Ask participants to briefly describe their postcard to others. You can offer an example to get the group started.

The activity can end with simply talking about their postcard ideas as described above, or you can have young people actually make postcards using art supplies (magazines for cutting out pictures works well). Young people could send their completed postcard to a friend or relative, or you can use this activity in combination with Letter to Myself.

Post-it® Planning
(Planning)

Young people, by themselves or as a group, write on self-stick notes all the tasks that are necessary to undertake a particular project or activity. As a group, they place these notes in order on a wall or on butcher paper to create a timeline of the steps they will need to take.

For example, you are leading a group in planning an open house. You have an easel up front with "Open House" written at the top. Distribute Post-it® notes and ask young

people to take turns writing tasks. Cathy writes "Choose a date" and sticks her note on the easel. Danielle writes "Buy ice cream" and puts that up. Henry writes "Reserve the conference room" and sticks his up. Pretty soon there are dozens of notes on the easel. Alex then volunteers to put them in order. He comes up to the easel and, with the help of the group, reorders the sticky notes.

Rotation Brainstorm
(Planning and Reflection)

In small groups (or individually), young people start brainstorming on a piece of butcher paper with a header written to identify a topic or concept. It's typically good to have each group select a person to scribe. After some period of time the facilitator plays a sound (like a slide whistle or tambourine), calls "Switch," and each group moves to the next station to continue brainstorming where the previous group left off. At the end, make sure to provide time for participants to read all the sheets. If you have enough wall space, you can place the sheets side by side where everyone can see them and facilitate a large group reflection.

For example, tape three easel sheets up to different walls and label each as follows: Places we could hold our fundraiser; Entertainment at fundraiser; and, Food possibilities. Divide youths into three groups. Have one group go to each station and start brainstorming. Say, "Please have one person list all the ideas your group comes up with — and go as quickly as possible!" After three minutes, ring a bell and say, "Rotate clockwise." Help groups move clockwise to the next station, where they add to the brainstorm list of the previous group. After three rotations, ask participants to walk around and read over the three sheets.

Round Robin
(Planning and Reflection)

Round Robin is simply the name for taking turns. This is often an effective technique to use in discussion because it gives everyone a turn. With a volunteer technique like Popcorn style, louder or more confident youth might speak a lot and overshadow quieter youth. You can always tell youth they have the option to "pass" when it's their

Excerpts from HighScope's Youth Worker Methods Series by Tom Akiva.

turn. With Round Robin, you will want to manage the time, perhaps by giving each person a set amount of time to talk.

For example, say, "We're going to go around the room and answer a simple question: What is your goal for this week? Who would like to answer first?" Kate raises her hand. "OK, we'll start with Kate, then continue to her left." Each youth takes a turn answering the question.

Scenario
(Planning)

Have youth read or act out a scenario to guide them in considering issues relevant to a particular topic. If you have them role-play a scenario, each person in a group should have a role, even if the role is observer. For a written scenario, youth can read the narrative, then discuss.

Some examples:

- Have young people plan out and perform skits, modernizing traditional fairy tales.
- Have youth participants create skits about bullying situations. After they role-play, discuss the issues that came up.
- Host mock presidential debates.

A variation, called Triads Role-play, works well for young people to practice a skill or address certain communication topics. For example, say you are helping a group learn active listening skills. Create groups of three. Have participants in each group decide who will be the talker, who will be the listener and who will be the observer. The talker can talk about a subject while the listener practices active listening techniques. After the role-play, the observer can say what he or she observed. Then they can do two more role-plays so that everyone gets to play every role.

Standing in the Shadow of Our Success
(Reflection)

You can use this activity to review and celebrate a personal and group sense of accomplishment. It helps participants consider their role in contributing towards the group's progress. Ask participants, one by one, to physically go to the place in the room where they felt most successful in moving the group towards its goals. For example, someone who helped a small group negotiate a decision may sit in the corner where the small group met. Someone who was happy with how they participated in a full group discussion may stand by the flip chart. Invite participants to say a sentence or two about their contribution.

Think-pair-share[3]
(Planning and Reflection)

This simple exercise can really help get a conversation going, especially when young people don't feel comfortable sharing in a large full group. Young people review or consider a question, a video clip, or an article. Youths next discuss the question, clip, or article with a partner, then with the rest of the class.

For example, you could tell the full group, "I want you to consider this questions: What is the most important message to take away from that movie? Think about it yourself first and jot down an answer. Then talk to your partner about it. Then we'll have a full group discussion."

Twenty Questions
(Planning)

After young people select a topic in which they are interested in doing research or a hands-on project, have them brainstorm 20 questions about the topic or area. You can then ask them to narrow the questions down to a handful of the most important ones and address these through research or a project.

---

[3]Lyman, F. (1992). Think-pair-share, thinktrix, thinklinks and weird facts: An interactive system for cooperative learning. In N. Davidson & T. Worsham (Eds.), Enhancing thinking through cooperative learning (pp. 169-181). New York: Teacher's College Press.

Excerpts from After School Program Basics by Deborah Moore, YWI.

Planning and Reflection Techniques (continued)

For example, say a small group is putting together a presentation on sexually transmitted infections (STI). Have them brainstorm and list twenty questions they have about STIs. Then have them circle the five to which they're most interested in learning the answers. They can then begin their research by focusing on answering those five questions.

Word-webbing
(Planning and Reflection)

Starting with a main concept in the center of a piece of large paper (roll paper works well), you or young people write related concepts, issues or facts, then connect them to the main concept with lines. Continue this process using one or more of the related concepts as the center topic. The result is an intricate web of lines, facts, issues and ideas. Young people may wish to even use different color markers to represent different levels or types of ideas.

Word-webbing can work with a leader doing all the writing, but it's often more effective when many young people are engaged in writing ideas and making connection lines. Laying the paper out on a table or on the floor can facilitate this type of participation.

Some example main ideas:

- Our community
- The media
- Leadership
- Our 4-H club

Excerpts from After School Program Basics by Deborah Moore, YWI.

Activity Planner

Activity name: _____

Time required: _____ Targeted ages: _____ Number that can participate: _____

Goal or objective of activity: _____

_____

Activity leader: _____

Other staff and volunteers: _____

Best practices

☐ Youths' role in planning and activity choice: _____

☐ How and where are various groups integrated into design?

      Large group_____

      Small group_____

      Individual_____

☐ What delivery mediums or activities are used? Circle all that apply:

visual art activities	sports and recreation	outdoor adventure	academic assistance
music and drama	mental exploration	citizenship and service	cooking
construction	science or nature	other: _____	

Timed plan

(For example, 10 minutes to introduce and demonstrate an art project, 20 minutes to work on a project and 5 minutes to clean up)

Time	Activity	Note
	Beginning	
	Middle	
	End	

Activity Planner (continued)

Supplies needed:

☐_____   ☐_____

☐_____   ☐_____

☐_____   ☐_____

What needs to be done	By when	Who is responsible

Preparation required:

Alternative if activity doesn't go as planned:

Excerpts from After School Program Basics by Deborah Moore, YWI.

Activity Map

Theme or subject:

	Activities	Related goal(s)
Sports and games		
Citizenship and leadership		
Workplace activities		
Outdoor adventures		
Mental exploration		
Life skills		
Creative activities		