

# STANDARD 3: Youth-Centered Program Design

We know our programs aren't something we do "to" or "for" youth, but rather *with* youth. Add in a high-quality learning environment plus program activities that speak directly to students' needs and you've got the recipe for a program that really accelerates young people's academic, social, and emotional learning.

On this indicator, we are:  
**1 - Experiencing challenges**  
**2 - Making progress**  
**3 - Right on track**  
**4 - Excelling**

	How does youth-centered program design incorporate youth voice?	How are we doing?
<b>PD1</b>	Youth are included in program design. We encourage and provide meaningful opportunities for youth voice and choice.	1 2 3 4
<b>PD2</b>	We encourage youth to share their ideas, and listen with respect to contributions and feedback from students.	1 2 3 4
<b>PD3</b>	Youth have opportunities to lead program activities.	1 2 3 4
<b>PD4</b>	As a staff, we model leadership behavior.	1 2 3 4
<b>PD5</b>	We ask open-ended questions like "why?" "what if?" and "how can we?" to extend learning. We intentionally pause after questions to allow youth time to think before answering.	1 2 3 4
<b>PD6</b>	We encourage youth to solve problems and think creatively.	1 2 3 4

	What does youth-centered program design look like in our program structure?	How are we doing?
<b>PD7</b>	We're intentional about creating a positive environment that keeps students safe physically, and is also an emotionally safe space where students can be their authentic selves.	1 2 3 4
<b>PD8</b>	Our program is equitable. All are warmly welcomed, regardless of ability, cultural background, gender identity, race, ethnicity or income.	1 2 3 4
<b>PD9</b>	Our program is culturally responsive. Our activities reflect, incorporate and value the cultures of the youth we serve.	1 2 3 4
<b>PD10</b>	Our daily schedule provides structure, while also allowing for flexibility.	1 2 3 4
<b>PD11</b>	Students have enough time to complete activities and ensure smooth transitions.	1 2 3 4
<b>PD12</b>	We offer a variety of ways for youth to engage in activities – either as individuals or in groups.	1 2 3 4
<b>PD13</b>	We're ready for the day. That means we start with a plan for activities, and have all the information, tools and supplies needed for successful completion. (And when youth guide activities in a different direction, we follow their lead as appropriate.)	1 2 3 4
<b>PD14</b>	Our program curriculum is research or evidence based, and our day-to-day activities are informed by best practices in the field of youth development.	1 2 3 4
<b>PD15</b>	We take seriously our role in supporting and nurturing young people's cognitive, physical, social and emotional needs.	1 2 3 4
<b>PD16</b>	We regularly connect with schools and families to make sure our program offerings align with and respond to other aspects of students' lives.	1 2 3 4

Notes & Examples



# Youth-Centered Program Design

## CONTINUED

PD17

PD18

PD19

How does youth-centered program design support workforce development?	How are we doing?
We're intentional about building upon students' interests, talents and skills to prepare them for success in school, higher education, workforce, or the military.	1 2 3 4
Our program focuses on 21st Century workforce skills, like critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication.	1 2 3 4
We cultivate partnerships and mutually-beneficial collaborations with colleges, employers and other professionals in our community to help youth envision themselves in a wide variety of potential career pathways.	1 2 3 4

PD20

PD21

PD22

PD23

How do staff reinforce youth-centered program design?	How are we doing?
We use a variety of approaches when introducing a new activity (direct instruction, modeling, visual aids, etc.) to meet a variety of youth learning styles.	1 2 3 4
We clearly explain the goals, purposes and expectations for each activity and encourage youth to make connections to previous learning or concepts.	1 2 3 4
We use developmentally appropriate language when speaking with youth, and confirm that they understand what's being communicated.	1 2 3 4
We help youth connect program activities to real-world applications that are meaningful and relevant to them.	1 2 3 4

### SEL Link

Social emotional learning isn't exclusively for young people — adults need it too.

Just as we're instructed to "put on our own oxygen mask before assisting others," so too must we take into account our own SEL development. Afterschool programs are best positioned to help young people develop strong SEL skills when adult SEL is part of the plan.

That means being intentional about creating an environment that supports SEL development for both students and adults. CASEL offers an online model for adult SEL development that focuses on three parts: Learn, Collaborate, Model.  
(<https://schoolguide.casel.org/focus-area-2/overview/>)

### RESOURCE Alert



(Use phone camera to scan this QR code to get connected to resources)