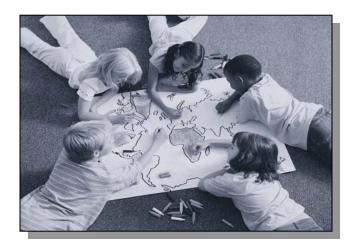# The Afterschool Program Assessment System (APAS)

APAS is offered exclusively by The National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) at the Wellesley Centers for Women.

What are the benefits of APAS?

* Helps afterschool programs align program improvement efforts with desired youth outcomes, yet flexible in that the tools can be used together or separately

* Designed specifically for afterschool programs

* Research-based, scientifically field-tested instruments

* Based on a menu approach, wherein programs measure those outcomes that fit best with their program design and goals

* Affordable and user-friendly format

* Multiple internal and external uses for tracking, monitoring and measuring improvements in program quality and youth outcomes

What is APAS?

The Afterschool Program Assessment System (APAS) helps afterschool programs improve their program quality and reach their desired outcomes for children and youth. APAS is one of the only assessment systems available that helps afterschool programs link quality and youth outcomes together in a comprehensive, flexible and integrated fashion.

APAS includes two measurement tools—the Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes (SAYO) and the Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT) along with the nFocus Kidtrax database system.

* SAYO - measures changes in intermediary youth outcomes linked with long-term healthy development and educational success (*see page 2*).
* APT - helps programs examine important aspects of program quality linked to the SAYO Outcomes (*see page 3*).
* nFocus Kidtrax database - offers an easy way to enter your SAYO results, record your APT observations, and generate customized reports that are easy to analyze.

Background & Development

The SAYO and the APT tools have been extensively piloted, and scientifically tested. SAYO and APT have been used by nearly one hundred afterschool programs in Massachusetts, Georgia, North Carolina, and New Jersey. As part of the statewide Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study (MARS) in 2004, links were found between APT program quality and SAYO youth outcomes.

How Does It Work?

The Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes (SAYO)

The **SAYO** uses brief pre-participation and post-participation outcome surveys to collect data about youth from regular education teachers and afterschool staff. The **SAYO** is based on a menu approach in which programs collect data on outcomes that are most aligned with their goals for the young people they serve. The **SAYO** is designed for programs serving children from kindergarten through middle school.

SAYO Outcome Areas

- Behavior in the Program/Classroom
- Initiative
- Engagement in Learning
- Relations with Adults
- Relations with Peers

- Problem Solving
- Communication Skills
- Homework
- Academic Performance (SAYO-Teacher only)

Each outcome area is measured by asking teachers and staff to respond to four or five questions related to observable youth behaviors. These items have been extensively tested and found to work as a single scale that effectively captures the outcome being measured. Teacher and/or staff responses to these surveys can be completed for all participating youth or for a sample of youth in a program.

Sample SAYO Behavior Items

Please circle the number that best describes how often this student:	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Usually	Always	N/A (√)
a. Is able to regain control of behavior when given warning.	1	2	3	4	5	
b. Works well independently when expected to do so.	1	2	3	4	5	

Programs that use SAYO will gain information on how their participants have changed and what gains, if any, they have made over the course of the year. However, as is true with all similar program evaluation research, the results cannot necessarily be attributed to program participation. We encourage those using the SAYO to collect additional data on youth which may enable their programs to better understand the ways in which it may be contributing to outcomes. It should be noted that SAYO was designed primarily as a program assessment tool which can help programs track changes in youth linked to participation. *SAYO should not be used as an individual youth diagnostic tool.*

Together, SAYO & APT, combined with the Kidtrax database provide a comprehensive, easy to use system that can help you assess your afterschool program and track improvement.

How Does It Work?

The Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT)

The APT is a quality assessment tool designed to help programs strengthen practices that research suggests are linked to SAYO outcome areas. The APT includes two tools: The **APT Observation Tool (APT-O)**, which focuses on observable program practices; and the **APT-Program Questionnaire (APT-Q)**, a self-assessment tool which examines those aspects of program quality that occur "behind the scenes," such as program planning and connections with schools and parents.

What does the APT Measure?

Positive Program Climate:
- Welcoming & Inclusive Environment
- Staff use Positive Behavior Guidance
- High Program and Activity Organization
- Space is Conducive to Learning
- Program Supports Staff

Practices that Support Individualized Needs & Interests
- 1:1 support
- Varied/Flexible Approaches & Scheduling
- Opportunities for Autonomy
- Connections with Families

Supportive Relationships:
- Staff-Youth Relationships
- Peer Relations

Practices that Stimulate Engagement & Skill Building
- Staff Promote Engagement & Thinking
- Connections with Schools
- Targeted SAYO Skill Building/Activities
- Youth are Positively Engaged in Program & Skill Building

Sample Items - APT Observation Tool

B. Staff Promote Youth Engagement & Stimulate Thinking	How true?	Notes
Staff are energetic, enthusiastic, and/or upbeat. *1=Staff appear distant, bored or "flat" in their demeanor.*	1 2 3 4	
Staff are actively engaged in activities with youth (e.g. interacting with groups, or individual youth; providing ongoing facilitation, participating with youth). *1=Staff do not engage with youth (e.g. chatting with other staff or engaged in own activity).*	1 2 3 4	
Staff encourage youth to share control/responsibility for activity (e.g. Youth help set out materials for art project, youth are encouraged to take the lead in selecting and initiating activities). *1=Staff maintain control throughout activity period, resist input from youth, do not seek youth involvement.*	1 2 3 4	

Is APAS right for my program?

APAS tools work best when used by:

* Afterschool programs that serve youth in Grades K-8th grade

* Programs of all sizes and most types

* Well-established programs (1+ year). It may not be suitable for start-up programs, those experiencing high staff turnover, facility changes and/or major shifts in program focus

* Programs with regular/consistent programming and youth attendance across a full school year. It may not be appropriate for drop-in, specialized/limited programs (like Karate class 2/hrs wk), or those focused exclusively on academic tutoring.

How is APAS different from other assessment tools?

* Includes outcome areas that research links to success in school and the workplace

* Gathers data from teachers and after school staff—whereas most other youth outcome tools rely exclusively on youth perspectives

* Allows programs to focus on assessing specific, observable practices rather than reflecting upon more general quality characteristics.

* Allows programs to examine how youth are participating in the program

* Results from the Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study found links between APT quality and SAYO-(S) youth outcomes.

* Includes a comprehensive database system.

For more information on APAS visit
www.niost.org
Phone: **781-283-2546**
E-Mail: **NIOST@wellesley.edu**.

How are programs using the APAS system?

* Comprehensive, self-assessment of program practices by program administrators and multi-level teams

* Help promoting greater consistency in practices across multiple sites

* Pinpointing topics for staff development sessions and as a guide for delivering feedback to staff that is concrete and constructive

* Using pre- and post- assessments of program practices to measure change over time

* Using baseline youth behaviors in SAYO outcome areas to aid in program planning

* Communicating with schools about the needs of individual youth

* Measuring change over time in youth outcomes areas to track program progress toward goals

I want to use APAS, how do I proceed?

Step 1: Contact a NIOST representative to determine the appropriate training needed for your program(s):
* SAYO
* APT
* APAS (SAYO & APT)

Step 2: Learn about and set-up the nFocus Kidtrax database system (approx. 4 hour commitment)

Step 3: Attend either an APAS training at our annual Boston Summer Seminars, hire a NIOST trainer(s) to conduct (any of the above) trainings at your venue, or take the online SAYO tutorial (a SAYO only option).
Important: NIOST encourages 2 people per site/program to complete a training.

Step 4: You're ready to get started!