

Agenda for Children Leading for Quality Initiative

Integrated Self Assessment Support System (ISAS) *A Professional Development and Quality Improvement Partnership*

Participating in ISAS means committing to a professional development and quality improvement partnership with the Agenda for Children (AFC).

ISAS Principles of Practice

The ISAS principles of practice that guide this work are:

1. Striving for excellence in out-of-school time (OST) experiences for all children and youth that include positive relationships and high quality activities.
2. Ongoing professional development of OST staff, which requires a commitment to change, support, and accountability.
3. Pursuing the organizational conditions and practices necessary for supporting quality programs, including quality supervision and building and sustaining a strong team with a shared vision.
4. The importance of self assessment through observation and the use of research-based assessment tools, such as the APT and OSS.
5. Action planning based on site-level data and reflective practice that includes all levels of staff in identifying challenges and affirming strengths.
6. Integrating and sustaining program improvement through continued self assessment, documentation of processes and outcomes, and institutionalization of policies and practices.
7. Building the OST professional community through peer leadership, mutual learning, and sharing of challenges and promising practices.

A Four Year Process and Partnership

Agenda For Children

Sites join the ISAS process through conversations with the AFC and the initial signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Over the course of 4 years, the site partners with the AFC to learn, take leadership of, and integrate the process and principles into the organization.

For two years, sites participate in and receive the supports of the "full ISAS" model, and in years 3 and 4 sites transition to "ISAS integration" mode.

At least twice a year, the AFC meets with each site to discuss progress and reaffirm their commitment. Each site is also a part of the larger, city-wide AFC community.

Full ISAS Model

During “full ISAS” the following processes are facilitated by an AFC quality coach in partnership with site-based leadership. The sites shift from learning the process in year one to beginning to take on facilitation responsibilities in year two. **Full ISAS includes the following components:**

Classroom Observation

Three times a year, coaches and staff members at all levels participate in two days of classroom observation using a portion of the Assessment of Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT), developed by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time. Observers rate 31 items selected from three sections of the APT (Staff-Youth Relationships, Positive Behavior Guidance, and Quality of Activities.)

Coaches and staff then participate in a debrief meeting to share ratings and their perceptions of the program and to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Following the debrief, coaches and staff work together to develop an action plan to target specific APT items and other aspects of the program believed to be in need of improvement.

Organizational Self Study (OSS)

Staff at all levels complete a 20-item organizational survey developed by the AFC to help sites better understand how they function as an organization and how they think about and work towards quality. Survey questions fall into two main categories: 1) Organizational Culture and 2) Management. After independently completing the survey, coaches lead multi-level site teams in a debrief meeting to discuss survey findings, identify aspects of their organizational functioning to improve, and develop a plan for improvement (action plan). The OSS and debrief and action planning process are to be repeated twice during the year.

Quality Coaching

AFC “quality coaches” partner with leadership at each site to help them lead staff through the process of assessment, debriefing, action planning, and implementation. Coaches work with Program Directors to help them implement the APT action plan and lead staff through the process of program improvement, meeting with PDs ~13-15 hours per year. Coaches also support executive level administrators in developing and implementing their OSS action plan and in supervising the overall improvement process, meeting with them ~6-8 hours per year. In addition, coaches meet jointly with executive level administrators and program directors (~4 hours per year) and facilitate orientations, debriefs, and planning meetings. In year 2, facilitation begins to be transferred from the coach to the site leadership.

Communities of Practice (CoP)

ISAS offers support through and requires participation in Communities of Practice (CoPs). A CoP is a group of individuals with a shared identity and/or interest who come together regularly to engage in a collective learning process focused on advancing practice. CoP participation is required of executives, program directors and front line teaching staff from each site. Front line and program director CoPs occur ~9 times per academic year, and executive level CoPs occur ~5 times per year. Facilitated by professionals, CoPs are designed to: 1) create an environment where discussion is safe and productive; 2) help participants define the agenda topics from among their OSS and APT improvement efforts; and 3) guide participants in identifying, implementing, and reporting back on changes in practice at their sites. Notes from CoPs are shared across all levels of staff to facilitate connections and communication.

Community Sharing and Celebrations

Two-three times per year, the city-wide AFC Leading for Quality community come together to share experiences and ideas and to celebrate and support each other’s work.

The full ISAS, the components take place across the year according to the following model:

General Orientation: ISAS Process, Roles/Responsibilities, Site-based Plan/Calendar (~1.5 hours)

Classroom Practice Observations and Action Planning (23hrs)

- Orientation to Observation and APT Tool (~2 hours)
- Classroom Observation Using APT (3 Rounds; 1 round includes two 2-hour observations)
- Classroom Observation Debrief (3 Rounds; ~2 hours per round)
- APT-Related Action Planning Session (2 sessions of ~1.5 hours each)
- Written APT-Related Action Plan is distributed to all members of the organization

Organizational Self Study (OSS) and Action Planning (7.5 hours)

- Orientation to the OSS Tool (~2 hours)
- Completion of the OSS (2 Rounds)
- OSS Debrief (2 Rounds, 2 hours per round)
- OSS Action Planning Session (1-2 sessions of 1.5 hours each)
- Written OSS-Related Action Plan is distributed to all members of the organization

Implementation of APT and OSS Action Plans

- Implementation flows into the next round(s) of observations and check ins

Ongoing AFC Supports

- Quality Coaching (see chart below for details) (25 hrs)
- Communities of Practice for Front Line Staff, Program Directors, and Executives (10-18 hrs)
- Community Sharing and Celebrations (6-9 hours)
- Bi-annual site based check-ins (3 hours)

Participation of Staff Across the Site:

A key principle of the ISAS process is the inclusion of staff across all levels in assessment and improvement. With ISAS: front line staff (FLs) are the teaching/front line staff, program directors (PDs) are the direct supervisors of the FLs, the executive level administrator (EL) is the PD's direct supervisor, and upper-level executive administrators (UEs) are any executives situated "above" the EL. *Participation across all levels is recommended throughout the process and required as follows:*

Activity	FL	PD	EL	UE
MOA & bi-annual meetings	-	required	required	required
General Orientation	required	required	required	-
APT Orientation	required	required	recommended	-
APT Observations	required*	required	recommended (1-2 times)	recommended (at least once)
APT Debrief	required*	required	required	recommended (at least once)
APT Action Planning Session	required*	required	required	-
OSS Orientation	required	required	required	recommended
OSS Debrief	required	required	required	recommended (at least once)
OSS Action Planning Session	required	required	required	-
Coaching	-	17-19 hours	10hrs	2hrs
CoPs (9 FL, 9 PD, 5 EL)	min. 6 of 9	min. 6 of 9	min. 3 of 5	-
Cross Program events	required	required	required	recommended

* With APT observations, debriefing, and action planning, a minimum of 2 front line staff must be included, and those staff should be included across all 3 phases in a round.

ISAS INTEGRATION

After two years of full ISAS, sites move into an “ISAS integration” phase in which they take on responsibility for facilitating the self assessment and quality improvement processes. They receive reduced time with quality coaches but maintain their connections with the larger AFC community.

The long term goal is integration of the ISAS principles of practice (see principles on page 1), and each site’s integration experience and focus will vary.

Commitment from ISAS Integration Sites

ISAS integration sites commit to:

- Intentionally pursuing the **ISAS principles of practice** and integrating them into their organization
- Developing a **personalized action plan** with their coach that details how they will move forward with this work, and determining how their coaching hours will be used
- Participating in **citywide AFC Leading for Quality events** and initiatives, including:
 - Regularly attending and/or presenting on their quality efforts at Communities of Practice
 - Regularly attending and/or presenting at citywide AFC/ISAS celebrations
- **Helping to develop our OST professional community**, by participating in the design and implementation of peer leadership opportunities and in other ways

Agenda for Children Support

During ISAS Integration, the **support from the AFC includes:**

- 16 hours of **Quality Coaching** to help site leadership integrate the ISAS principles
- Access to **Communities of Practice**
- Access to seasonal celebratory/professional development **events**
- **Opportunities to share promising practices** across the community

Foundations for Success

As a part of honoring the ISAS principles of practice, **for sites to have a successful integration experience, they should:**

- Demonstrate the ability to
 - Facilitate assessment, reflection, and action planning that is inclusive of all staff
 - Orient staff to assessment tools and foster inter-rater reliability
 - Facilitate debriefs and create safe/productive spaces for conversation
 - Articulate their practice, successes, and challenges
 - Design and implement action plans
- Commit to
 - Strong leadership & a culture committed to self assessment and quality improvement
 - Pursuing staff continuity
 - Devoting the additional time and resources necessary for professional development and incorporating this work into their program