QUALITY is the gateway to equity and outcomes.

The Denver Afterschool Alliance (DAA) prioritizes access and opportunity for authentic engagement in high quality programming. Meeting organizations where they are, DAA gives afterschool providers a way to actively participate in processes that build quality, utilizing nationally-recognized standards and a comprehensive system of supports.

Professional development, technical assistance and coaching services are offered through DAA’s network and the Denver Quality Afterschool Connection (DQUAC). Learning spaces include opportunities for providers to learn from national experts and local practitioners and are designed for out-of-school time educators to share their own professional expertise.
Research indicates that high quality out-of-school time programs lead to positive outcomes for youth. Outcomes include increased access to new experiences and opportunities, improved health and wellness, development of social and emotional skills and improved academic achievement.

Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Smith et al., 2012
Quality Framework

The DAA quality framework includes seven pillars that represent the foundations of out-of-school time programs. Based on input from both national and local experts and partners, this quality framework serves to guide out-of-school time programs in assessing their strengths and identifying barriers to success. Organizations are strongly encouraged to adopt these pillars and use resources made available by DAA to strengthen or develop practices that bolster the quality of their programs.

The following seven pillars provide a framework for designing out-of-school time experiences that impact youth in positive ways. Pillars can be observed at both the organization and site levels.
ACCESSIBILITY & BELONGING

*Organization*: The organization honors and values the diversity of Denver by actively seeking to serve all youth, of all abilities, in all communities. Systems are established to address inequities and barriers to access within the organization and the communities where programming is provided.

*Site*: Opportunity gaps are identified by site teams through the cultivation of authentic and collaborative relationships with youth, families, schools and communities. Teams work to create an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all youth in a culturally responsive manner. Sites work to develop a sense of belonging, usefulness, competence and influence.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

*Organization*: The organization’s vision and mission guide the work of the program and staff. Staff regularly engage in data-driven decision making and the intentional design implementation and evaluation of all program elements.

*Site*: Site teams regularly assess the quality of their programs and utilize data to make strategic changes. Staff practice and youth voice are included in continuous improvement processes, and programming is regularly refined to support staff skill development to meet youth interest and need.
LEARNING & LEADING

**Organization:** Recognizing that program staff members are critical to program success and that afterschool is a professional field, the organization invests regularly in and consistently provides professional development to build the necessary skills for staff to succeed and to serve all youth. Organizations endeavor to build strong pipelines for career opportunities within their organization.

**Site:** Throughout the program, youth are provided with voice and choice in opportunities to engage in a variety of meaningful activities that promote rigor, build skills and provide opportunities to serve as leaders and mentors within their communities.

PARTNERSHIP

**Organization:** The organization participates in and connects with the larger afterschool community in order to expand learning opportunities and services for youth and to advance the afterschool field. Efforts are made to align program goals with those of city and school district leadership.

**Site:** The program nurtures and maintains positive relationships between all stakeholders including youth, program staff, families, school staff, other youth-serving organizations and the larger community in order to expand learning opportunities, services and civic engagement.
SAFETY

Organization: Organizational policy and systems are established in a manner that ensures the program meets or exceeds minimum standards to keep youth physically, emotionally and intellectually safe in the program environment.

Site: Practices and procedures are established in a manner that ensures the program meets or exceeds minimum standards to keep youth physically, emotionally and intellectually safe in the program environment.

SEAL

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL & ACADEMIC LEARNING

Organization: The organization prioritizes culturally inclusive, SEAL-rich environments for all youth as well as all adults, preparing them with skills needed to model social and emotional intelligence. Support is provided for the cultivation of social-emotional skills for all staff across three competency areas: Self Awareness and Self Management, Social Awareness and Relationship Skills, and Decision Making. SEAL practices are intentionally infused into organizational culture and policies.

Site: Each site works to build a SEAL-rich climate and culture, provides explicit instruction and intentionally integrates SEAL practices into existing programming for the benefit of both youth and adults. The site offers opportunities to learn, develop and practice SEAL skills in their afterschool learning environment.
SOUND FINANCIAL PRACTICES

**Organization**: Funds are spent with integrity and alignment to both short and long-term goals. For example, the organization ensures role consistency for staff and community partners and practices data-driven decision-making, while focusing on how to sustain quality services for youth and families.

**Site**: Program funding is allocated at the site in a manner that ensures adequate materials and supplies for all youth. Programming is offered consistently during hours that meet community needs.

*References*


Interested in partnering with us? Contact DenverAfterschoolAlliance@denvergov.org to get started.

LEARN MORE ABOUT DAA AT DENVERGOV.ORG/AFTERSCHOOLALLIANCE

FOR INFORMATION ON DQUAC AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, VISIT DQUAC.COM