

Kid City Evaluation:

Observation Findings from the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) Tool

Kid City is a partnership between the City of Maplewood Parks and Recreation (Maplewood) and Z Puppets Rosenschnoez (Z Puppets). Z Puppets is a Minneapolis-based theater and puppet company. With funding from the Minnesota State Arts Board, Kid City brings the people of Maplewood together through theater, puppetry, and interactive art installations.

As part of our evaluation of Kid City, we used the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) tool to observe each session of the August Kid Council, a week-long program for junior high youth focused brainstorm theater. Brainstorm theater uses theater to pose solutions to social problems. The YPQA is a validated assessment used to measure the quality of youth programs, and rates program quality on multiple domains with a scale of 1-5 (with “1” being the lowest rating and “5” being the highest rating). **The Kid Council component of Kid City received an overall average score of 4.8 out of 5 on the YPQA tool.** This score indicates that youth participants received high quality programming. This document provides a summary table of ratings for each domain of the YPQA and some brief commentary about why that rating was assigned. Additionally, we conducted a focus group with Kid City youth videographers, conducted a focus group with the Kid City team, and administered a short survey at Kid City events; there are separate write-ups of these evaluation activities.

Domain	Rating	Commentary/Reasoning
Safe environment		
Emotional safety	5	Received top rating for each session
Healthy environment	5	Received top rating for each session
Emergency preparedness	5	Received top rating for each session, as applicable
Accommodating environment	5	Received top rating for each session
Nourishment	4.3	Pretzels were available during most sessions as a snack; suckers were available some during some sessions.
Supportive environment		
Warm welcome	5	Received top rating for each session
Session flow	4.9	On the last day, one youth waited with staff for 20-30min before getting picked up by her parents at the end of the planned session time.
Active engagement	5	Received top rating for each session
Skill building	5	Received top rating for each session
Encouragement	4.6	Most encouragement from staff consisted of non-specific, evaluative positive remarks, such as “Good job!” rather than specific, non-evaluative assessments of youth performance or progress.
Reframing conflict	N/A	Not applicable in this context; there were no conflicts.

Domain	Rating	Commentary/Reasoning
Interaction		
Belonging	5	Received top rating for each session
Collaboration	5	Received top rating for each session
Leadership	4.8	There were numerous informal, participatory opportunities for youth to guide an activity within a concrete framework, but there were few opportunities for youth to fully lead others in activities.
Adult partners	5	Received top rating for each session
Engagement		
Planning	N/A	Not applicable in this context; since the program was only a week long, youth planning was not expected.
Choice	4.8	During the first session, staff did not offer youth a process choice, such as determining roles or order of activities.
Reflection	3.3	Staff periodically engaged youth in reflecting on their activities, though all youth were not ensured an opportunity to participate. When reflecting, on most days staff did not use more than one reflection strategy (such as talking, writing, etc.). Feedback from youth about their participation was typically informal and occurred during activities, and there was little opportunity for formal feedback from youth.

Summary

The Kid Council component of Kid City received an overall average score of 4.8 out of 5 on the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) tool. This score indicates that youth participants received high quality programming. The six subdomains for which Kid Council programming received lower than the maximum score are: Nourishment, Session Flow, Encouragement, Leadership, Choice, and Reflection. To improve these YPQA subdomain scores, it is recommended that no unhealthy snack options are available on any day of programming, special attention is paid to timing of session endings (or, alternatively, special attention is paid to communicating changes in session end times to parents or guardians of youth participants), encouragement from staff is non-evaluative and specific, youth are provided with structured leadership opportunities, youth have the opportunity to make a process choice on each day of programming (such as determining roles or order of activities), and that there are formal opportunities for youth to reflect on their activities that utilize multiple reflection strategies. While the YPQA scores identify areas for improvement, they also indicate that overall Kid City delivered high quality youth programming in its first year of implementation.

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