

**Engaging Youth in Assessing the Alignment Between Their Programs  
 and the LIAS Learning Principles: Why do it? \***

<b>Facilitates Good Youth Development</b>	<b>Strengthens Organizational Development and Capacity-Building</b>	<b>Catalyzes Youth Involvement in Community Change</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes leadership development</li> <li>• Encourages community- and relationship-building</li> <li>• Facilitates skill-building and real-world/experiential learning</li> <li>• Provides youth with tools to address issues that impact their lives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens planning, decision-making, and resource-allocation processes</li> <li>• Enhances fundraising efforts</li> <li>• Strengthens staff development and capacity-building</li> <li>• Facilitates youth ownership and buy-in</li> <li>• Encourages community- and relationship-building</li> <li>• Helps organizations address the needs of culturally diverse youth and communities</li> <li>• Promotes a youth-friendly, democratic, and responsive organizational culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides youth with opportunities, skills, and information to make real change</li> <li>• Focuses community change efforts by integrating issues most important to young people</li> <li>• Strengthens strategies informed by the unique, creative insights of young people</li> </ul>

\* *Youth REP: Step by Step: An Introduction to Youth-Led Research and Evaluation* by Youth In Focus, 2002

## **LIAS Self-Assessment Tool**

### **Instructions**

1. For each LIAS learning principle, read over the narrative description together and ask:
  - Are there any words or phrases that people would like to discuss so they have a better-shared understanding of the term? (Pay special attention to the words in red font). It is important that the observers who are using the assessment tool understand all the words in the descriptions of the principles.
  - Do you think these principles are important and why?
2. For each LIAS learning principle, look at the observable indicators in the table below the narrative and ask:
  - What kind of patterns do you see between the “Early,” “Developing” and “Mature” columns?
  - Are there any descriptions that people would like to discuss so they have a better-shared understanding of the description? It is important that the observers who are using the assessment tool understand all the indicators in the table.
  - Are there other things you will look for that would indicate that the learning principle is being applied in the program activity?
3. In teams of 1 or 2, go into a program activity and explain that you are there to help assess the program. This will help people discover ways that the program could be improved. Explain that you will be observing using an observation tool but that you will not be speaking or interrupting the activity. You will quietly exit the room when you are finished.
4. Using the observation tool, check one box in each row that best describes what you are observing. This includes what you are seeing and hearing during your observation. Complete an observation sheet for each learning principle. Each activity observation should take at least 20 minutes.

5. Assign the following points to each box:
  - One (1) point for boxes in the “Early” column
  - Two (2) points for boxes in the “Developing” column
  - Three (3) points for boxes in the “Mature” column
  - Use the “Evidence” column to make a few notes about what you saw and heard, so that you can explain to your teammates and the program staff why you gave the rating you did.
  
6. Some of the important indicators of the learning principles may not be observable in a single program activity. These are shown in green font, and require a brief interview with the activity leader or youth participants. After the activity, find time to interview the adult program leader and/or youth participants to ask the questions on page 8, “Learning Principles that May Not Be Observable”. Assign a point(s) to each question:
  - One (1) point for “no”
  - Two (2) points for “yes, sometimes or some”
  - Three (3) points for “yes, frequently and/or most”

Go back to the appropriate learning principle page and check the appropriate box.
  
7. Add up the total points for each page and put the total at the top right corner of the page
  
8. If there are more than one observer in a team, compare your responses with your teammates and discuss any differences
  
9. Look at where each activity was scored high or low. How could this activity be improved?

# LIAS Self-Assessment Tool

## LIAS Learning Principle: Active

**Total Points: \_\_\_ (of 24 pts.)**

Learning of new knowledge is strengthened by using many of our senses – seeing, hearing, and touching.. Afterschool learning is also enhanced by activities that involve young people in “doing” – activities that allow them to be **physically active**, stimulate their innate curiosity, and that are **hands-on and project-based**. Hands-on learning involves the young people in a total learning experience, which enhances their ability to **think critically**.

Early	Developing	Mature	Evidence
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in activities that only allow them to learn through watching or listening.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in activities that allow them to learn through multiple senses but not by “doing”.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in activities that allow them to learn through multiple senses and by “doing”.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in activities that are not hands-on and do not result in a finished project.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in hands-on activities, but they do not result in a finished project.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in activities that are hands-on, project-based, and result in a finished project.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people participate in activities that are restrictive and do not allow them to be physically active.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people participate in activities that allow them to be physically active to some degree.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people participate in activities that allow them to be fully physically active.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people participate in activities that do not allow creative, active, or artistic expression.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people participate in activities that allow some creative, active, or artistic expression.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people participate in activities that fully allow creative, active, and artistic expression.	
<input type="checkbox"/> When young people’s curiosity is peaked within an activity, there is no opportunity to express it or explore it further.	<input type="checkbox"/> When young people’s curiosity is peaked within an activity, they are allowed to express it, but not given the opportunity to explore it further.	<input type="checkbox"/> When young people’s curiosity is peaked within an activity, they are able to express and explore this.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in activities that do not require or allow them to think critically. <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in activities that require and allow for some critical thinking.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in activities that require and encourage them to think critically.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are not allowed to make their own decisions about what to do or how to do it.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some young people are allowed to make their own decisions about what to do or how to do it.	<input type="checkbox"/> Most young people are allowed to make their own decisions about what to do or how to do it.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people do not appear excited about what they are doing or learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some young people appear excited about what they are doing or learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Most young people appear excited about what they are doing or learning.	

<sup>1</sup> Activities that promote critical thinking include those when the staff members ask open ended questions (that can’t be answered with “yes” or “no”, and when youth are categorizing and classifying, working in groups, making decisions, and finding patterns).

# LIAS Learning Principle: Collaborative

**Total Points: \_\_\_ (of 15 pts.)**

**Collaborative** learning provides the best means to explore new information. Afterschool programs are well positioned to build skills that allow young people to **learn as a team**. This includes **listening to others, supporting group learning goals, resolving differences and conflicts, and making room for each member to contribute his or her individual talents**. Collaborative learning happens when participants engage in a **common task** where each individual **depends on and is accountable** to each other.

Early	Developing	Mature	Evidence
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people work individually and do not practice group skills. <sup>2</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people work in groups but do not successfully practice group skills (take responsibility for a part).	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people work in groups and practice group skills.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people work in groups but without a clear or common purpose or sense of accountability for one another.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people work in groups that have a clear purpose but only some group members cooperate in accomplishing it or demonstrate a sense of shared accountability to one another.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people work in groups that have a clear purpose. All group members cooperate in accomplishing it and demonstrate a sense of shared accountability to one another.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people do not assist one another in their learning and do not act cooperatively.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some young people assist one another in their learning and act cooperatively.	<input type="checkbox"/> All young people assist one another in their learning and act cooperatively.	
<input type="checkbox"/> When working in groups, only one or few members contribute his or her individual talents.	<input type="checkbox"/> When working in groups, some members contribute his or her individual talents.	<input type="checkbox"/> When working in groups, every member contributes his or her individual talents.	
<input type="checkbox"/> When minor conflicts occur, young people are unable to problem-solve together to resolve conflicts and they require adult intervention.	<input type="checkbox"/> When minor conflicts occur, some young people are able to problem-solve together to resolve conflicts but still require adult intervention.	<input type="checkbox"/> When minor conflicts occur, young people are able to problem-solve together to resolve conflicts without adult intervention.	

<sup>2</sup> Group skills can include active listening, contributing ideas or actions to the group, and taking responsibility for a part of what the group needs or is doing.

# LIAS Learning Principle: Meaningful

**Total Points: \_\_\_ (of 21 pts.)**

Young people are personally motivated when they find the topic meaningful. This means having **ownership** over the learning topic and the opportunity to **assess their own progress**. Motivation is increased when the learning is **relevant** to their own interests, experiences, and the **real world** in which they live. Community and cultural relevance is especially important to young people. Rather than learning that is focused on academic subjects, young people in afterschool can **apply their academic skills** to their areas of **interest and real world** problems. Also, young people find activities more meaningful when they are given responsibility, **leadership roles, and opportunities to serve** to others.

Early	Developing	Mature	Evidence
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in activities that are restricted and do not allow them to use creativity or draw on their own ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in activities that allow for some creativity or that draw on their own ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in activities that are open-ended (e.g. problem solving or unrestricted exploration) and require them to use creativity and draw on their own ideas.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people do not provide input and are not allowed to make decisions about how they do things (process) or what they do (content).	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people provide little input and make limited decisions about how they do things (process) or what they do (content).	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people provide input and make decisions about how they do things (process) or what they do (content).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people do not reflect on or assess their own progress.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are given limited opportunities to reflect on and assess their own progress.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are given frequent opportunities to reflect on, assess, and discuss their own progress.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people do not contribute opinions, ideas, and/or concerns to discussions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some young people contribute opinions, ideas, and/or concerns to discussions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Most young people contribute opinions, ideas, and/or concerns to discussions.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people do not take on leadership or service responsibilities and roles.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some young people take on leadership or service responsibilities and roles.	<input type="checkbox"/> Most young people take on leadership or service responsibilities and roles.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people do not explore, share, or celebrate their heritage and culture with others.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some groups of young people explore, share, and celebrate their heritage and culture with others.	<input type="checkbox"/> At some point, all groups of young people explore, share, and celebrate their heritage and culture with others.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in activities that are not relevant to their own experiences or are not connected to the real world.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in activities that have a limited relevance to their own experiences or connection to the real world.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are involved in activities that are relevant to their own experiences and are connected to the real world.	

## LIAS Learning Principle: Supports Mastery

Total Points: \_\_\_ (of 12 pts.)

Young people tell us they are most engaged when they are given opportunities to learn **new skills and get “really good at something”**. This requires the opportunity to learn and **practice** a full sequence of skills. Afterschool activities should not promote the gathering of random knowledge and skills. Rather, afterschool learning activities should be **sequenced** and designed to promote the layering of skills that allows participants to **create a product or demonstrate mastery** in a way they couldn’t do before. Programs often achieve this by designing activities that lead to a **culminating event or product** that can be viewed and celebrated by peers and family members. For older youth, many programs are depending on apprenticeship models to assist youth in achieving a sense of mastery.

Early	Developing	Mature	Evidence
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are not learning or practicing new skills.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some young people are learning and practicing new skills.	<input type="checkbox"/> Most young people are learning and practicing new skills.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are not learning skills that are sequenced or building on previously learned skills, that lead to a greater mastery.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are learning skills that build on previously learned skills, but will not allow them to experience a sense of mastery.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are learning skills that are sequenced and build on previously learned skills, leading to a greater mastery.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are not working toward culminating activities that demonstrate their mastery through a final product or presentation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are working toward culminating activities. However, these activities do not allow them to demonstrate their mastery through a final product or presentation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are working toward culminating activities that demonstrate their mastery through a final product or presentation.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people do not appear challenged by the activities. Instead, they appear bored and/or unengaged.	<input type="checkbox"/> Only some young people appear challenged and engaged by the activities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Most young people appear challenged and engaged by the activities. They appear focused and absorbed by the activity.	

## LIAS Learning Principle: Expands Horizons

Total Points: \_\_\_\_ (of 9 pts.)

Young people benefit by learning opportunities that **take them beyond their current experience**. **Learning about new things and new places** brings a sense of excitement and discovery and increases the individual's sense of what's possible. Afterschool programs have the flexibility to go beyond the walls of their schools. They can **use the surrounding community** as a classroom and bring in individuals and businesses that young people may not otherwise come into contact with. Meeting new people can expand social networks in ways that create new opportunities. Expanding young people's horizons also includes helping them to develop a **global awareness**. This includes increasing their **knowledge of other cultures and places and their understanding of the issues and problems they have in common across cultural and political differences**.

Early	Developing	Mature
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are not learning new things or about new places beyond their own experiences.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some young people are learning new things and about new places beyond their own experiences.	<input type="checkbox"/> Most young people are learning new things and about new places beyond their own experiences.
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people do not have the opportunity to go out into the community or learn from activities that bring aspects of the community into the program.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adult leaders bring aspects of the community into the program, but young people are not able to learn directly from community members or go out into the community.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people are learning from community members, by going out into the community and/or from activities that bring aspects of the community into the program.
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people do not participate in activities that promote an awareness of the global community, other cultures, or global issues.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people participate in activities that indirectly refer to the global community, other cultures, or global issues.	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people participate in activities that actively promote an awareness of the global community, other cultures, or global issues.



## **LIAS Learning Principles that May Not Be Observable**

These learning principles may be assessed by asking youth participants and/or adult leaders.

### **Active**

1. Do the activities in this program result in some kind of a finished product? What opportunities do youth have to do project-based work themselves?

### **Meaningful**

1. Are young people given opportunities to reflect on and assess their own progress? Can you give concrete examples? Are these opportunities limited or frequent?

2. What opportunities do young people have to build leadership skills in this program?

3. Are groups of young people given opportunities to explore, share, and celebrate their heritage and culture with others? Can you give concrete examples? Does this happen for some or most of the young people?

### **Supports Mastery**

1. Are young people learning and practicing skills that are new? Can you give concrete examples? Does this happen for some or most of the young people?

2. How does this program help kids get “really good at something”? Can you give concrete examples of how skills build on one another to help young people reach mastery? How often does this happen?

3. Are young people working toward culminating activities? Do these activities allow them to demonstrate their mastery through a final product or presentation? Can you give concrete examples? How often does this happen?

### **Expands Horizons**

1. Are young people learning new things and about new places beyond their own experiences? Can you give concrete examples? Does this happen for some or most of the young people?

2. Are young people learning from community members? Can you give concrete examples? How often does this happen?

Are young people going out into the community as part of their learning? Does this happen for some or most of the young people?

3. What opportunities do young people have to learn about the global community, other cultures, or global issues?