

Introduction

SEA programs should use data and assessments to measure and inform programming. All member programs are required to track and submit a wide range of data annually to SEA, from program enrollment and attendance to staff retention and organizational finances (for more details, see [SEA Program Data Requirements](#)). In addition to this overall program data, SEA requires that member programs track students' school performance and encourages programs to evaluate the impact of their academic programming. This guide addresses ways to track students' academic performance and to measure and evaluate academic programming.

Overview

Below is an overview of the various assessment options shared in this guide, ranging from assessments of individual student progress to assessments of program quality.

- School Performance
- Academic Skills
- Classroom Observations
- Student Surveys
- Rubrics

Tracking School Performance

All SEA programs should regularly monitor and track the following data for their afterschool program participants.

- School attendance rates
- Grades
- Grade-level completion
- High school graduation rates
- College matriculation rates and placement types¹

Additionally, programs might consider tracking the following.

- State test scores
- Suspensions or behavioral incidents
- Course rigor (# of honors and AP courses, # of years of core courses)
- High school placement (rigor/quality of placements, whether public, private, or

¹ For alumni, programs should consider tracking additional information such as financial aid received and debt burdens, social-emotional status, and progress toward career options. For more information on this topic, see the [SEA Best Practice Guide on College Preparation and Alumni Support](#).

charter)

- ❑ Grades broken down by area of focus (homework completion vs classroom participation vs quizzes/tests/projects)

Tracking academic performance shows students that you are paying attention to and care about their academic progress. The information you learn can be used to create student support plans and strategies. Data informs conversations with participants' families and other supporters. Program staff might also identify trends that inform needed changes to academic programming. To determine what data they collect and the design of their academic sessions, programs should consider creating a Logic Model or Theory of Change. For a place to start, consult the [Logic Model Development Guide](#) by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Academic Program Evaluation

There are multiple approaches to program evaluation. Which ones a program uses depends on several factors, including the purpose of the evaluation (i.e. to demonstrate impact vs. to improve programming), resources available, which stakeholders are included, and the type of data desired. The remainder of this document provides some ideas and discussion of academic program evaluation methods.

Academic Skill Assessment

Several SEA member programs assess students' academic skills, such as literacy or math. These assessments can be useful for both planning and evaluation purposes. On the planning side, knowing students' academic level helps inform the content for academic sessions. For example, in homework help, staff might use knowledge of a student's academic level to customize supplemental materials or arrange extra tutoring for a student who is behind grade-level. On the evaluation side, programs that lead literacy units might use assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of their literacy programming. Below are several types of assessments that programs might consider using.

- ❑ Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (Literacy) - used by CitySquash and Racquet Up Detroit
- ❑ iReady (Literacy) - used by CitySquash
- ❑ Quill.org (Grammar) - used by CitySquash
- ❑ HMH [Reading](#) and [Math](#) Inventory - used by MetroSquash

Classroom Observations

Staff who are interested in making their academic time more effective might ask their supervisor or a colleague to conduct a formal observation of one of their academic sessions, or they might videotape a session to watch and evaluate later, either on their own

or with a supervisor/colleague. Below are some tips for formal classroom observations.

Before the session

- ❑ Send to the observer:
 - ❑ Your goals and plan for the session (if applicable, include the unit overview)
 - ❑ Some key questions you would like their help in evaluating. For example, “Do students seem engaged? How can I build better relationships with students during my sessions? How can I better manage student behavior?”
- ❑ Meet with the observer to review your plans and key questions, and answer any of their questions. (The observer should not provide feedback at this point.)
- ❑ Give students advance notice. Tell them you’ve asked the person to observe you as part of your professional development, and ask them, to the extent possible, to pretend that the observer is not there.

During the session

- ❑ The observer should arrive several minutes before the students and find a place in the classroom where he/she can see and hear everything well without disrupting the session.
- ❑ The observer should refrain from engaging with students during the session so that he/she can fulfill his/her role as an observer.
- ❑ The observer should take notes, recording the following. The more specific, the better. Use facts to paint a picture of what is happening in the classroom.
 - ❑ Timing (when things happen)
 - ❑ Example: 3:55pm - first 2 students arrive, 4:05pm - all students are present, 4:10pm - staff kicks off session, 4:15pm - students start independent work, etc.
 - ❑ What the students say/do
 - ❑ Examples: 5 out of 15 students talking with peers / not working, “Do you know the answer to #4?”, “I wonder how the main character feels about that decision?”, etc.
 - ❑ What the staff says/does
 - ❑ Examples: “Take out your planner and show them to the volunteer at your table,” “Lucy, how are you feeling today?”, steps out of classroom with distracted student for two minutes, etc.

After the session

- ❑ The observer should independently review his/her notes and pull out some overarching themes and questions, both in relation to the questions you asked as well as his/her own thoughts and questions.
- ❑ The observer and “observee” should meet, using the following as a conversation

guide.

- ❑ The “observee” goes first and shares his/her reflections on the session (Was this a typical session? What went well? What was a challenge? What would you have liked to have handled better/differently?)
- ❑ The observer reviews his/her factual notes from the session (timing, what students did/said, what staff member did/said) and questions he/she had.
- ❑ The “observee” is invited to share feedback or thoughts after hearing the notes, and answers to the questions.
- ❑ The observer shares his/her thoughts on what the “observee” did well, what could be improved, and how it could be improved.

Student Surveys

Surveys can be an effective way of collecting feedback from students. Here are a few ways to consider using surveys.

- ❑ **Student input in advance:** Use student surveys to inform your planning. For example, students in a book club might suggest books they are interested in reading. On a broader level, students might be invited to share what topics would be helpful to cover during the program year (resumes, interview skills, healthy relationships, drugs/alcohol use, etc.).
- ❑ **During an activity:** During an activity, you can take a quick pulse of student feedback in a couple of ways.
 - ❑ **Rating:** Ask the students to evaluate themselves, the group, or their understanding of a topic by holding up the number of fingers that corresponds to their answer. For example, “On a scale of 1-5, how focused are you right now on your work, with 1 being totally distracted and 5 being laser-focused?”, or “On a scale of 1-5, how well do you feel you understand the difference between adjective and adverbs?”.
 - ❑ **Online surveys:** There are various online surveys, such as [Mentimeter](#), that enable staff members to pose a question to students. Students can answer anonymously by texting their responses, and the staff member can see the results in real-time on his/her computer. These surveys can be used for evaluation or to enhance discussions.
- ❑ **Post-surveys:** After an activity or unit, you might ask students for feedback on the unit. Here are a couple ways to consider this:
 - ❑ On their way out of the classroom, students hand you an “exit slip” - a piece of paper with their name and response to a question you asked. For example, you could ask them to rate themselves, on a scale of 1-5, how well they worked during the session, or you could ask them to respond to a quick question like, “What was your biggest take-away from today’s conversation?”

- ❑ At the end of a unit, students complete a one-page (or online) survey sharing their feedback on the unit itself, the staff member, and their own self-evaluation.
- ❑ **Pre- and post-surveys:** Use pre- and post-surveys to identify change in knowledge or beliefs over time. For example, give the same survey at the start and end of a nutrition unit to evaluate if students' knowledge or beliefs have changed as a result of the unit. These types of surveys can also be used to assess social emotional learning.

Rubrics

Rubrics are an effective way to specify what is expected in advance, and then measure results by those expectations. Academic staff may use rubrics to set clear expectations for what a strong student essay or public speaking presentation looks like (see [Squash Haven example](#)); this feedback is helpful for students in evaluating their own performance, and for staff members in evaluating how well they did in teaching and supporting students to reach the desired outcomes.

Additional Resources

- ❑ [Social-emotional-learning Assessment Scales](#) by Transforming Education
- ❑ [Data Playbook](#) by the Shusterman Foundation
- ❑ [Measuring Outcomes](#) by the US Dept. of Health and Human Services, Compassion Capital Fund

SEA Shared Drive Resources

- ❑ [Squash Haven Rubric](#)
- ❑ [StreetSquash Academic Tracker](#)

This guide was written by Charlie Levinson at SquashBusters, with support from the 2017-2018 Academic Leadership Committee.