



# Technical Guide for SEL Skill Measures

Updated: 04/13/2021

[DRAFT]

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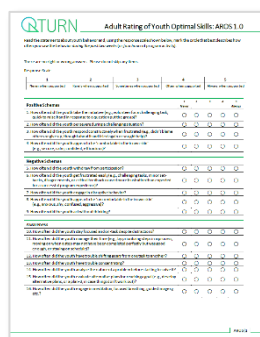
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# Introduction

The Quality-Outcomes Design and Measure (Q-ODM) toolbox includes a comprehensive suite of evidence-informed measures designed to assess the quality and impact of out-of-school time (OST) programs. This guide provides information about three measures of children’s engagement and socio-emotional skill. We also provide some technical information about the measures and general guidance about how to administer, score, and interpret them.

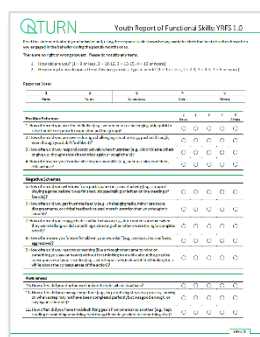
## About the measures

The Youth Report of POS Engagement (YRPE) was developed mainly by selecting and modifying items from existing engagement scales and adding a few items to better represent our theoretical definition of “engagement” (described below). The Adult Rating of Youth Behavior (ARYB) was developed by simplifying a version of its predecessor (i.e., the Staff Rating Youth Behavior; Peck et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2016) so that it is easier to administer and represents more fully the six SEL skill domains (described below). The Youth Report of SEL Skills (YRSS) was developed mainly by selecting and modifying items from existing youth self-report scales and adding a few items to better represent our theoretical definition of SEL skills (described below).



The **Adult Rating of Optimal Skills (AROS)** asks staff to rate youths’ **optimal SEL behavioral skills** based on behaviors displayed during program activities, as observed during several program offering sessions. AROS scores are good indicators of how youth are likely to perform in settings where they are well supported. Staff should observe each youth for at least four hours of program activities before using the AROS. The YRFS can be used as a pre-test for program planning purposes and, also, as a post-test for assessing SEL skill growth

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The **Youth Report of Functional Skills (YRFS)** asks youth about **mental and behavioral aspects of their functional SEL skills** in general (i.e., beyond the program setting and into environments such as home and school). YRFS scores are good indicators of how youth are likely to perform in settings where they are not well-supported. The YRFS can be used as a pre-test for program planning purposes and, also, as a post-test for assessing SEL skill growth.

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The two measures described here are generally applicable to, and can be used for, any and all types of OST program offerings. Each of the measures can also be used with youth classified as having an individualized education program (IEP), ‘special educational needs and disability (SEND), or similar designations in the same way you would use them for anyone else. For the youth self-report measure

(described below), staff should be prepared to help each youth understand the gist of any word or item that they may have difficulty with (as described in the “How and When to Use” section of the youth self-report measure description).

Please keep in mind that these measures do *not* provide a clinical assessment of children or youth. They are intended only for lower-stakes planning, improvement, and program evaluation purposes (e.g., where low scores signal areas of focus and support for practitioners but not failure, sanctions, or other disciplinary action).

We generally recommend using the Adult Rating of Optimal Skill (AROS), described below, as the primary outcome variable for typical OST program impact studies because we believe that it is the most likely to detect SEL skill growth.

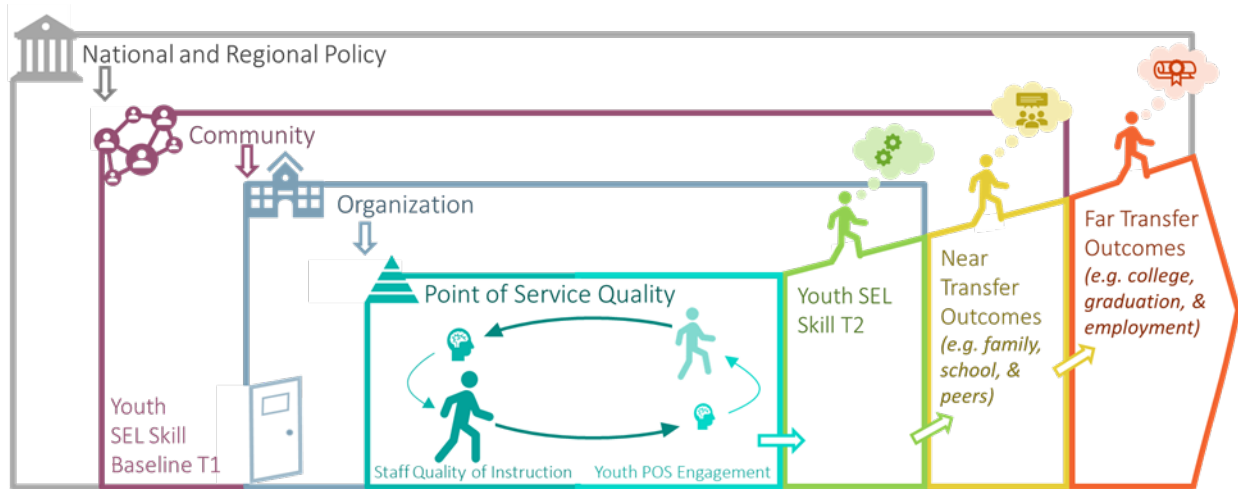
**The following sections include:**

- The theory of change underpinning the measures
- A guide to each of the two measures covering what it is, how it was developed, how and when to use it, and how to administer it.

# Theory of Change

The measures described here are based on a theory of change (Figure 1) for how youth develop and grow their SEL skills within OST settings and then transfer these skills to other areas of their lives (Peck & Smith, 2020). Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which youth develop essential SEL skills such as regulating emotions, responsibility, empathy, and teamwork. These skills play a key part in youth's ability to do well in school, make successful transitions to adulthood, and achieve positive life outcomes including educational attainment, employment, and good health.

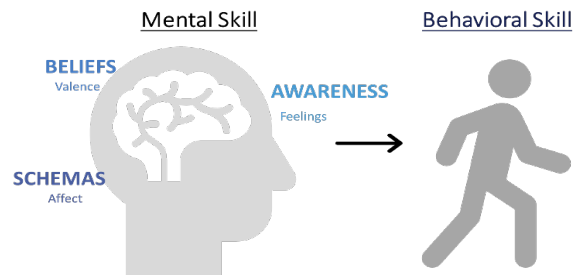
**Figure 1: Theory of Change for Multilevel Cascades of Causes and Effects.**



## SEL mental skills

In Figure 1, the icons depicting a brain between staff and youth behavior at the point of service indicate that mental skills cause behavior. The term *mental skill* refers to the psychological parts and processes used to interpret social events, generate emotions, reflect on options, and select behavioral responses. There are dozens of specific components involved with these processes (most of which operate automatically, outside of conscious awareness), so we simplify their description into the three core aspects of mental skill that help staff promote learning and that help youth take control of their own learning and behavior: schemas, beliefs, and awareness (described below). Figure 2 represents a close-up of these mental processes and their relation to behavior (Peck & Smith, 2020).

**Figure 1. The Neuperson Model**



We refer to this set of mental processes as the *neuperson*<sup>1</sup> because each of the three different aspects of mental skill (i.e., schemas, beliefs, and awareness) corresponds roughly to a different area of the brain. At the risk of oversimplifying, *schemas* record the quality of early and ongoing caregiving, *beliefs*

<sup>1</sup> The neuperson part of the theory of change (see Figure 2) is a practical simplification of the more detailed Basic Levels of Self (BLoS) model (Roeser et al., 2006; Roeser & Peck, 2009).

record the details of a complicated self and social world, and *awareness* interacts with schemas and beliefs to convert *automatic* reactions into *intentional* actions. In short, schemas, beliefs, and awareness are the raw material from which all mental SEL skills (by whatever name) are constructed; that is, when considered together, they *are* mental skills.

Mental SEL skills defined in terms of schemas, beliefs, and awareness can be further described in the following terms:

- **Attachment schemas** – These are youth’s unconscious, nonverbal frames of thinking about relationships, formed by their early experiences with caregivers. Warm and responsive caregiving generally produces attachment schemas that make children feel safe, happy, and curious, whereas cold and insensitive caregiving generally produces attachment schemas that make children feel anxious, angry, and confused. These schemas act like ‘set points’ for the way youth connect and interact with people. For example, youth with ‘secure’ attachment schemas will generally find it easy to trust and develop positive relationships with new people, whereas youth with ‘anxious’ attachment schemas will generally find it difficult to trust and interact positively with others.

When thinking about the emotional states of mind that youth bring to program offerings, it is helpful to remember that schemas tend to function automatically, outside of youth’s awareness and control. This means that staff can help youth become calm, centered, and focused by avoiding blame, acknowledging their feelings, and expressing warm and supportive encouragement.

- **Beliefs about the self and world** – Beliefs are the most common and well-studied aspect of mental skills, probably because they are relatively easy to consciously reflect on and describe. However, people have hundreds of beliefs, and they go by many different names (e.g., expectations, self-concept, self-efficacy, ideologies), so it can be confusing to decide which ones to focus on. In addition, given that there are so many available measures of beliefs, and although we include two supplemental beliefs scales (described below), we focus mainly on schemas and awareness.

Basic beliefs form over time into complex belief systems, such as attitudes, goals, and plans. Values, opinions, and mindsets are also examples of beliefs. Beliefs are formed automatically during social interactions and intentionally during self-reflection. They are also relatively malleable (compared to schemas) and can change as a result of a single social interaction, or even just reflecting on a previous or anticipated social interaction. We consider them central aspects of SEL skill because of their strong influence on both perception and behavior. For example, beliefs about the speed, depth, and temperature of a river, coupled with beliefs about one’s swimming ability, strongly influence the decision to swim across the river (and the accuracy of those beliefs strongly influences the success of any attempt to swim across the river).

- **Ability to control the focus of awareness** – Also known as *executive attention* or *executive functions* (Peck & Smith, 2020), the ability to control the focus of awareness refers specifically to consciously focusing attention on current thoughts and feelings. This sounds simple enough, but if you have ever tried to meditate then you probably realize how difficult it is to sustain the focus of awareness (e.g., it is very easy for distractions to pull the focus of awareness away from what we are trying consciously to focus on). Awareness is the basis for all forms of self-reflection, which includes things like memorization, recollection, problem solving, planning, and noticing and controlling impulses. Similar to schemas, awareness has been relatively neglected

by those concerned with SEL skill growth and positive youth development. However, the ability to control the focus of awareness allows youth to use intentional forms of agency to change their behavior and promote the development of their personal and social identities.

Most of the many available SEL frameworks and measures focus on youth's beliefs while neglecting both schemas and awareness. Thinking about SEL mental skills in terms of schemas, beliefs, and awareness simplifies a lot of complexity while highlighting the critical but neglected roles that schemas and awareness play in youth's healthy development. Schemas are critical because of their strong influence on youth's habitual emotional tone and reactivity; meeting youth where they are at requires understanding that schemas automatically influence their thinking, feeling, and behavior and usually do so completely outside of their awareness. Consciously shifting and sustaining the focus awareness is critical because of its potential for intervening in what otherwise seem like completely automatic processes (e.g., emotional and behavioral reactivity). Growing these SEL skills allows youth to become more effective authors of their own healthy development.

# Adult Rating of Optimal Skill (AROS)

## About the AROS

The Adult Rating of Optimal Skill (AROS) is an observational rating instrument used to assess *optimal* SEL behavioral skills generated by three distinct but interrelated aspects of mental skill (i.e., schemas, beliefs, and awareness). Optimal skills are the best someone can do while receiving high-quality support to enact these skills within, for example, OST program settings. The AROS focuses on specific observable behaviors associated with the socio-emotional learning of youth from 5 to 18 years of age and can be used within the context of any type of OST program offering.

The AROS was not designed to be an exhaustive measure of SEL skills; rather, it was designed to focus on a few key types of behavioral skill related especially to emotion regulation (i.e., schemas) and reflective thinking (i.e., awareness). However, the AROS also includes two optional scales that are focused on youth behaviors that are hypothesized to reflect beliefs about emotion (i.e., Emotion Knowledge) and social equity (i.e., Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion). If your primary goal is to assess SEL skill growth, we generally recommend using observational measures like the AROS because they focus on optimal behavioral skills, which we view as the most valid and sensitive (to change) information about SEL skills.

The AROS was developed by selecting and modifying relevant items from the Adult Rating of Youth Behavior and by creating additional behavioral observation items aligned primarily to two neglected but fundamental aspects of mental skills: schemas and awareness. Although behavior tends to be a combined function of schemas, beliefs, and awareness, within the complex interplay among mental skills, and between mental and behavioral skills, some kinds of behavior (e.g., impulsivity) tend to be influenced more by schemas, whereas other kinds of behavior (e.g., “paying attention”) tend to be influenced more by awareness.

Psychometric details, including validity and reliability information, for the AROS are pending. However, given the very close alignment between our conceptual definitions of mental and behavioral skill and the item content on the AROS, we view the AROS as a highly face valid measure of youths’ optimal SEL behavioral skills and the SEL mental skills most likely to influence them. In addition, given our experience with this and similar measures, we expect the AROS scale scores to be reflect high levels of construct validity and be sufficiently reliable; that is, alpha coefficients of reliability should generally exceed .70.

After analyzing the data, we generally provide reports to each organization that show the three primary AROS scale scores (i.e., Positive Schemas, Negative Schemas, and Awareness) as a set of profiles that characterize the participating youth, along with some basic descriptive information (e.g., the percentage of youth in each profile). In cases where organizations also include one or both of the AROS belief scales (i.e., Emotion Knowledge and Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion), these profiles are composed of four or five scales. This optimal SEL skill profile information can be used to inform future planning (e.g., organizations serving high percentages of youth in ‘high-risk’ AROS profiles may decide to focus program activities more closely on the needs of these youth). If the AROS is also used as a follow-up measure, then similar aggregate information can be used to assess SEL skill change (e.g., by comparing the percent of youth in a high-risk AROS profile at baseline to the percentage of youth in a similar high-risk AROS profile at follow-up). Finding evidence of optimal SEL skill growth using AROS scores supports conclusions like (a) the youth participating in this OST program offering are improving their SEL skills and, potentially, (b) the reason youth are improving their SEL skills is because we are creating high-quality OST program offerings.



## How and When to Use

The AROS should be used by staff to assess youth’s optimal SEL behavioral skills. It can be used after at least two weeks (or four hours of program participation) from when youth first entered the program in order to assess their *baseline* SEL behavioral skills. Baseline SEL behavioral skill information can be used to plan program activities (e.g., to tailor program activities to the needs of the youth who are attending) and better familiarize you with the youth attending the OST program offering. If the aim is to assess ‘pre-test’ skill information for the purposes of assessing change with a post-test, it is best to collect AROS information as early as possible (i.e., near the four-hour mark of program participation) because later assessments may not accurately reflect youth’s ‘pre-test’ skills (i.e., they are likely already growing their skills during the first few weeks of program participation).

The AROS can also be used as a pre-test, near the beginning of the program, together with a post-test, shortly after or near the end of the program, in order to assess optimal SEL behavioral skill growth. Although AROS scores tend to be especially sensitive to SEL skill growth, if your primary aim is to assess SEL skill growth, we generally recommend waiting at least two months to conduct follow-up AROS ratings. Information about optimal SEL behavioral skill growth can be used to understand both youth’s development and the relation of this development to other aspects of OST programs (e.g., the impact of instructional quality on optimal SEL behavioral skill growth).

## Administration and Scoring

This section provides:

- **AROS items** – these are the questions or statements against which you will rate youth’s behavior.
- **Item response scale** – this contains the response options that you will use to indicate your rating of behavior.
- **The procedure for calculating the AROS scale scores** – this is the scoring process used to calculate overall ratings for each youth on each of the included AROS scale from the corresponding item scores.
- **The protocol for administration** – this is how you use the AROS measure to ensure you get the most honest and reflective ratings.

### Items

The AROS includes 16 core items (corresponding to the three primary scales), 14 additional items (corresponding to the two optional scales), and two additional questions about the youth and their attendance. The response scale for items 3-26 (and the optional scales) is:

Response Scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Never when supported	Rarely when supported	Sometimes when supported	Often when supported	Always when supported

1. How long have you known this young person? [1 = < 2 weeks; 2 = 2-8 weeks, 3 = 2-6 months; 4 = 6-12 months; 5 = a year or more]

2. For about how many hours of program time have you observed this young person? [1 = < 4 hours; 2 = 4-8 hours, 3 = 8-16 hours; 4 = 16-32 hours; 5 = 32 hours or more]

### Positive Schemas

3. How often did the youth take the initiative (e.g., volunteer for a challenging task; quick to raise hand in response to a question put the group)?
4. How often did the youth persevere during a challenging situation?
5. How often did the youth respond constructively when frustrated (e.g., didn't blame others or give up; thought about it and tried again or sought help)?
6. How often did the youth appear to be 'comfortable in their own skin' (e.g., secure, calm, confident, efficacious)?

### Negative Schemas

7. How often did the youth withdraw from participation?
8. How often did the youth get frustrated easily (e.g., challenging tasks, minor set-backs, disagreements, or critical feedback caused more frustration than expected for a successful program experience)?
9. How often did the youth engage in disruptive behavior?
10. How often did the youth appear to be 'uncomfortable in their own skin' (e.g., anxious, shy, confused, aggressive)?
11. How often did the youth act without thinking?

### Awareness

12. How often did the youth stay focused and on-task despite distractions?
13. How often did the youth manage their time (e.g., by prioritizing steps in a process, moving on when a step may not have been completed perfectly but was good enough, or staying on schedule)?
14. How often did the youth have trouble shifting gears from one task to another? (R)
15. How often did the youth have trouble concentrating? (R)
16. How often did the youth analyze the nature of a problem before starting to solve it?
17. How often did the youth evaluate alternative plans for reaching a goal (e.g., develop alternative plans, or a plan-B, in case things don't work out)?
18. How often did the youth engage in meditation, focused breathing, guided imagery, etc.?

(Optional AROS Scales)

### Emotion Knowledge

19. How often did the youth accurately name personal feelings (e.g., "I was angry," "that made me happy," or "I'd be surprised if...")?
20. How often did the youth describe feelings using more than simple words like happy or sad (e.g., embarrassed, exuberant, ashamed)?
21. How often did the youth accurately name *other* people's feelings (e.g., "she was happy" or "he looked frustrated")?
22. How often did the youth describe the reason for their feelings (e.g., "I got into a fight with my mom," "he called me names," or "that problem was annoying")?
23. How often did the youth effectively express their emotions to others (e.g., put their feelings into words; used phrases like "I felt..." instead of "you're wrong")?
24. How often did the youth identify the relation between the feelings of one person and the feelings of another (e.g., "she's sad because her mom is sick")?

25. How often did the youth identify the relation between situations and emotions (e.g., describes how peers would feel if their event was canceled)?

### **Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion**

26. How often did the youth challenge or correct other's bias or use of intolerant language (e.g., "that didn't seem very nice" or "that sounds racist")?
27. How often did the youth seem tolerant, accepting, or appreciative of physical, social, or cultural differences in other children and adults?
28. How often did the youth stand up for other youth when they were teased, insulted, or marginalized?
29. How often did the youth verbally demonstrate active role-taking (e.g., considered themselves in someone else's situation)?
30. How often did the youth verbally acknowledge how someone else's feelings or opinions differed from their own?
31. How often did the youth modify their behavior to acknowledge the value of someone else's ideas (e.g., went along with a plan, even though they didn't agree with it)?
32. How often did the youth demonstrate an understanding of the value of a diverse community (e.g., acknowledge how people with different strengths and weaknesses can work together to achieve a goal)?

### **Scoring.**

1. Rater responses to all items marked by "(R)" should be reverse scored, such that:  
1 = 5, 2 = 4, 3 = 3, 4 = 2, and 5 = 1.
2. The mean of the response values across all items within a scale should be calculated to produce a single scale score for each youth. If some item responses are missing, scale scores can be calculated as long as there are responses to at least two thirds of the items in each scale (but remember to calculate the mean score based only on the number of questions for which youth have actually provided a response). Each of the scale scores should range from 1 to 5.

**Instructions.** Read the statement. Consider the behavior of the target youth in the past two weeks in terms of the statement. Mark the circle that best describes how often you saw that behavior from that youth. Please do not skip any items. The "not applicable" (N/A) response should be used only if there were no situations in which the behavior could have been observed (i.e., no opportunities in the last two weeks). There are no right or wrong answers.

**Protocol.** Please read and carefully follow these criteria for observational ratings using the AROS:

1. Identify the adult who will conduct the ratings of each participating youth's behavior.
  - a. The adult rater should be a person who regularly leads the session in which the youth participates and has had the opportunity to observe the youth for approximately four hours of program-offering time, over a period at least two weeks, before completing the AROS;
  - b. Although there is no training requirement, the adult who rates youth on the AROS should, ideally, be among the best trained in the areas of youth development, social-emotional skills, and adult practices that promote positive youth development and SEL skill growth.
2. Identify the youth who will be rated, and fill in the Unique ID register in the Excel Template provided.
  - a. The Unique ID register template provided is **only** for the internal use of participant organizations. The template will automatically generate unique IDs for each youth whose behavior is being rated.
  - b. These IDs must then be used in completing the Ratings Template, as set out below.

- c. In order to separate personally identifiable data from ratings data, it is crucial that these two templates are saved in **separate**, private, secure, and memorable locations (e.g., in two different folders on a password-protected computer).
3. Observe youth during program activities for at least two weeks and for *at least* two hours per week of program time. The ratings should be based on direct observations of the youth, considering only behaviors the rater has actually seen. Behaviors that were reported to have occurred in other settings, or were not observed by the rater, should not be scored.
4. With reference to the guidance below, complete ratings for youth using the Ratings template provided.
  - a. Rate only those youth who have been identified (as outlined in step 2 of the protocol).
  - b. Ensure that you correctly enter the Unique ID from the register you have completed.  
The easiest way to do this is to copy and paste the ID from the register into the ratings template.
  - c. Allow approximately five minutes to complete the ratings for each youth (e.g., plan for 50 minutes to rate 10 youth).
  - d. The ratings should be completed during a quiet time where there are no distractions.
5. For most or all of the rating items, we could have added the phrase “when appropriate” because we want to know how often the behavior is observed in situations where the behavior is considered appropriate for that situation.
  - a. For example, for the question, “How often did the youth accurately name personal feelings?” using the response scale option “4” (i.e., “often when supported”) means that they usually use an emotion word that fits what they appear to you to be feeling; it should not be used to mean that they are talking about their feelings all the time.
6. There are no right or wrong answers. Please do not skip any items. If there are cases where the given behavior could not be observed because there were no opportunities for the given youth to have demonstrated the behavior, a “not applicable” response option is provided.

# Youth Report of Functional Skill (YRFS)

## About the YRFS

The Youth Report of Functional Skills (YRFS) is a self-report survey used to assess youth's *functional* mental and behavioral skills that are associated with three distinct but interrelated aspects of mental skill (i.e., schemas, beliefs, and awareness). Functional skills are the best an individual can do with no additional supports from the setting, so they are good indicators of how youth are likely to perform in most life settings. Functional skills are relatively-enduring SEL skill *traits* that are transferred into and out of OST programs; they are not static, but changes generally require effort, practice, and patience. In particular, according to our theory of change, through repeated sessions of activating existing functional skills and scaffolding and refining them in the form of optimal skills, optimal skills become converted into functional skills that are increasingly likely to be activated automatically in unsupported situations.

The YRFS was not designed to be an exhaustive measure of SEL skills; rather, it was designed to focus on a few key types of mental and behavioral skill related especially to emotion regulation (i.e., schemas) and reflective thinking (i.e., awareness) (Smith & Peck, 2020). However, like the AROS, the YRFS also includes two optional scales that are focused on youth behaviors that are hypothesized to reflect beliefs about emotion (i.e., Emotion Knowledge) and social equity (i.e., Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion).

The YRFS was developed to parallel the information generated by the AROS; that is, the YRFS items were created by modifying AROS items so that they would fit a youth self-report format. Consequently, the YRFS scales are aligned primarily to two neglected but fundamental aspects of mental skills: schemas and awareness. Although behavior tends to be a combined function of schemas, beliefs, and awareness, some kinds of behavior (e.g., impulsivity) tend to be influenced more by schemas, whereas other kinds of behavior (e.g., "paying attention") tend to be influenced more by awareness.

Psychometric details, including validity and reliability information, for the YRFS are pending. However, given the very close alignment between our conceptual definitions of mental and behavioral skill and the item content on the YRFS, we view the YRFS as a highly face valid measure of youth's functional SEL behavioral skills and the mental skills most likely to influence them. In addition, given our experience with this and similar measures, we expect the YRFS scale scores to be reflect high levels of construct validity and be sufficiently reliable; that is, alpha coefficients of reliability should generally exceed .70.

After analyzing the data, we usually provide reports to each organization that show the three primary YRFS scale scores (i.e., Positive Schemas, Negative Schemas, and Awareness) as a set of profiles that characterize the participating youth, along with some basic descriptive information (e.g., the percentage of youth in each profile). In cases where organizations also include one or both of the YRFS belief scales (i.e., Emotion Knowledge and Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion), the YRFS profiles are composed of four or five scales. This functional SEL skill profile information derived from the YRFS can be used to inform future planning (e.g., organizations serving high percentages of youth in 'high-risk' YRFS profiles may decide to focus program activities more closely on the needs of these youth). If the YRFS is also used as a follow-up measure, then similar aggregate information can be used to assess SEL skill change (e.g., by comparing the percent of youth in a high-risk YRFS profile at baseline to the percentage of youth in a similar high-risk YRFS profile at follow-up). Finding evidence of functional SEL skill growth using YRFS scores supports conclusions like (a) the youth participating in this OST program offering are improving their SEL skills and, potentially, (b) the reason youth are improving their SEL skills is because we are creating high-quality OST program offerings.

## How and When to Use

The YRFS can be used in different ways to suit different purposes. For example, the YRFS can be completed by youth shortly after they first enter the OST program in order to assess their *baseline* SEL functional skills. In order to get the most accurate responses, it is best to wait until staff and youth spend about four hours of program offering time together before having them complete the YRFS so that youth feel completely comfortable asking questions about any of the words or phrases used in the YRFS items. Baseline functional skill information can be used for program planning purposes (e.g., to tailor program offering activities to the needs of the youth who are attending).

The YRFS can also be used as a pre-test, near the beginning of the program, together with a post-test, shortly after or near the end of the program, in order to assess youths' SEL skill growth. For the purpose of detecting changes in functional skills, we generally recommend annual assessments of youths' functional SEL skills because (a) functional skills should theoretically take longer to change than optimal skills and (b) self-report measures tend to be less valid than observational measures due to *response bias* (e.g., demand characteristics, social desirability, acquiescence). Response bias usually shows up as scale scores that are higher than what we would normally expect (i.e., ceiling effects). In other words, people tend to self-report higher scores than may accurately represent their true standing, and such inflated baseline scores make it more difficult to detect actual changes.

In any case, response bias does not necessarily affect every young person's survey responses in the same way, and waiting until staff and youth become comfortable with one another before administering the baseline YRFS is designed to minimize response bias. If this protocol is implemented well, then using the YRFS as a follow-up measure after only a relatively short amount of program time (e.g., 3 months) can be an effective way to assess SEL skill growth, as long as we do not have unrealistic expectations about the amount of change we are likely to find. For example, the average amount of change across all youth may not appear to be very large, even though we may be able to identify a smaller subset of youth who evidence substantial SEL skill growth.

SEL skill growth information can be used to understand youth's development and the relation of this development to other aspects of an OST program (e.g., the impact of program quality on SEL skill growth).

We recommend using the YRFS with youth ages 10 and older. We also recommend encouraging youth to ask questions about any words or concepts about which they are uncertain. The YRFS should take about ten minutes to complete and can be used with youth in any kind of OST program offering.

## Administration and Scoring

This section provides:

- **YRFS items** – these are the questions or statements to which youth will respond.
- **Item response scale** – this contains the response options that youth will use to respond to the items.
- **The procedure for calculating the YRFS scale score** – this is the scoring process used to calculate youth's scores for each of the six domains from the individual item scores.
- **The protocol for administration** – this is how to use the measure to ensure you get the most honest and reflective responses from youth.

**Items.** The YRFS includes 16 core items (corresponding to the three primary scales), 14 additional items (corresponding to the two optional scales), and two additional questions about the youth and their attendance. The response scale for items 3-18 (and the optional scales) is:

1	2	3	4	5
Never when supported	Rarely when supported	Sometimes when supported	Often when supported	Always when supported

1. How old are you? [1 = 9 or less, 2 = 10-12, 3 = 13-15, 4 = 16 or more]
2. How many hours do you attend this program in a typical week? [1 = 1 or less, 2 = 2-3, 3 = 4-5, 4 = 6 or more]

### Positive Schemas

3. How often did you take the initiative (e.g., volunteer for a challenging task; quick to raise hand in response to a question put the group)?
4. How often did you persevere during a challenging situation (e.g., pushed through, even though you didn't feel like it)?
5. How often did you respond constructively when frustrated (e.g., didn't blame others or give up; thought about it and tried again or sought help)?
6. How often were you 'comfortable in your own skin' (e.g., secure, calm, confident, efficacious)?

### Negative Schemas

7. How often did you withdraw from participation in a social activity (e.g., stopped playing a game before it was finished; stopped talking or left an online meeting of friends)?
8. How often did you get frustrated easily (e.g., challenging tasks, minor set-backs, disagreements, or critical feedback caused more frustration than you thought it should)?
9. How often did you engage in disruptive behavior (e.g., interrupted someone when they were talking, or did something distracting when others were trying to complete a task)?
10. How often were you 'uncomfortable in your own skin' (e.g., anxious, shy, confused, aggressive)?
11. How often did you react to something (like a thought that came to mind or something you saw or heard) without first thinking for a while about the possible consequences of your reaction (e.g., acted impulsively instead of first thinking for a while about the consequences of the action)?

### Awareness

12. How often did you stay focused and on-task despite distractions?
13. How often did you manage your time (e.g., by prioritizing steps in a process, moving on when a step may not have been completed perfectly but was good enough, or staying on schedule)?
14. How often did you have trouble shifting gears from one task to another (e.g., kept reading or watching something even though it made you late for something else)? (R)
15. How often did you have trouble concentrating? (R)
16. How often did you analyze the nature of a problem before starting to solve it (e.g., gathered all of the information you could before trying to find a solution)?
17. How often did you evaluate alternative plans for reaching a goal (e.g., develop alternative plans, or a plan-B, in case the first plan didn't work out)?
18. How often did you engage in meditation, focused breathing, guided imagery, etc. (e.g. meditating every day, which would mean "always")?

(Optional YRFS Scales)

### **Emotion Knowledge**

1. How often did you accurately name personal feelings (e.g., “I was angry,” “that made me happy,” or “I’d be surprised if...”)?
2. How often did you describe feelings using more than simple words like happy or sad (e.g., embarrassed, exuberant, ashamed)?
3. How often did you accurately name other people’s feelings (e.g., “she was happy” or “he looked frustrated”)?
4. How often did you describe the reason for your feelings (e.g., “I got into a fight with my mom,” “he called me names,” or “that problem was annoying”)?
5. How often did you effectively express your emotions to others (e.g., put their feelings into words; used phrases like “I felt...” instead of “you’re wrong”)?
6. How often did you identify the relation between the feelings of one person and the feelings of another (e.g., “she’s sad because her mom is sick”)?
7. How often did you identify the relation between situations and emotions (e.g., described how your friends would feel if their event was canceled)?

### **Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion**

1. How often did you challenge or correct other people’s bias or use of intolerant language (e.g., “that didn’t seem very nice” or “that sounds racist”)?
2. How often were you tolerant, accepting, or appreciative of other people’s physical, social, or cultural characteristics that were different from yours?
3. How often did you stand up for other people when they were teased, insulted, or marginalized?
4. How often did you engage in active role-taking (e.g., imagined how you would feel or think about things if you were in someone else’s situation)?
5. How often did you verbally acknowledge how someone else’s feelings or opinions differed from your own (e.g., say something like, “that’s an interesting way to look at it” or “I wouldn’t have thought of that, but I get how you feel”)?
6. How often did you modify your behavior to acknowledge the value of someone else’s ideas (e.g., went along with a plan, even though you didn’t agree with it)?
7. How often did you demonstrate an understanding of the value of a diverse community (e.g., acknowledge how people with different strengths and weaknesses can work together to achieve a goal)?

### **Scoring.**

1. Youths’ responses to all items marked by “(R)” should be reverse scored, such that:  
1 = 5, 2 = 4, 3 = 3, 4 = 2, and 5 = 1.
2. The mean of the response values across all items within a scale should be calculated to produce a single scale score for each youth. If some item responses are missing, scale scores can be calculated as long as there are responses to approximately two thirds of the items in each scale (but remember to calculate the mean score based only on the number of questions for which youth have actually provided a response). Each of the scale scores should range from 1 to 5.



**Prompt.** Your responses to this survey will help us create the best possible program experiences for youth. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. We will keep your responses completely confidential, which means no one will ever know how you individually answered the questions.

**Instructions.** Please read each statement, and then think about yourself in terms of the statement. If you are not sure about the meaning of any of the words, please ask for more information. Mark the circle that best describes how you see yourself in general.

You are not required to answer any of the questions, and you can stop at any time. If you want to change any of your answers, please mark an “X” through the old response and fill in the new one.

Please note that higher scores are not better or worse – all people will have a mix of high and low scores, and we want to know your unique mix!

Please try to be as “true to you” as possible. When you are not sure, just pick the response option that is closest to how you think about yourself and keep moving. Thank you!

**Protocol.** Place each young person’s unique identification number on each survey. Distribute the surveys to the corresponding youth and ask them to put it in a designated location after they complete it (like an envelope, that will protect their anonymity). Ask youth to read the instructions and ask any questions they may have. While they complete the survey, encourage them to ask for clarification about the meaning of any words about which they are uncertain. Give them no more than 15 minutes to complete the survey.