



Education Reform Toolkits:
Resources to achieve results

Stakeholder Satisfaction Surveys for School-Level Performance Improvement

developed by district and charter operators
with support from



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Overview

This survey guide and question bank are resources for school- and district-level administrators who want to create stakeholder surveys to measure progress, identify areas of concern, or collect general feedback regarding their school(s). The question bank is an Excel-based spreadsheet containing thousands of survey questions used by charter and traditional schools around the country. The survey questions were collected from 13 school districts and charter management organizations (CMOs)*. Administrators can filter the thousands of questions in this bank by: survey topic, grade level, stakeholder surveyed and survey origin to view sample questions relevant to the survey they are trying to generate.

This document describes the basic steps necessary for making a successful survey, some tips for writing effective survey questions, and specifics on how to use the Excel-based question bank effectively.

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For further information or referrals to personnel in districts contributing to this guide, please e-mail: tools@broadfoundation.org.

* See accompanying Excel spreadsheet for complete list

Basic steps to a successful survey outcome

Most successful surveys are generated and executed according to the following steps:

1. Define the purpose of the survey.
2. Identify appropriate target audience.
3. Select a method for data collection.
4. Write the survey.
5. Administer the survey.
6. Collect results.
7. Draw conclusions.

1. Clearly define the purpose of the survey and how its results will be used.

Is the survey meant to identify opportunities to improve the “first day of school” experience for students or only to improve bus schedules? If the information will only be used to modify bus schedules, then don’t clutter the survey with extraneous questions.

Examples of survey goals include: evaluating current services, improving operational performance, planning for future innovations, making resource trade-offs, ascertaining communications effectiveness, etc. Below is an example purpose statement:

The ACME school district will survey parents at each school in March of each year in order to:

- *Solicit feedback on parent satisfaction in the areas of teaching and learning, school operations, and school climate*
- *Rate each school versus the survey score in prior years, versus the district average, and versus the school’s benchmark target*
- *Use information gathered to set next year’s par satisfaction target and incorporate key actions into the following year’s school input plan*

2. Identify appropriate target audience.

Is this a survey for students? Parents? Teachers? All school staff?

3. Select a method for data collection best suited to reach target audience within budget.

There are a number of options for conducting surveys. They vary from high-cost, high-involvement approaches like focus groups and phone interviews, to simpler, more cost-effective approaches like online surveys and mailings. The method chosen should reflect trade-offs such as cost vs. speed vs. response rate. The chart below provides a rough description of some common methods for survey administration.

Example Survey Method	Audience	Cost	Speed	Response rate
Online (e.g., surveymonkey.com)	Any	Low	High	Low
Paper – mailing	Parents/ faculty	Medium	Low	Low-medium
Paper – in class	Students	Low	High	High
Paper – send home with student	Parents/ guardians	Low	Medium	Low-medium
Phone call	Any	High	Low	High
Focus group	Any	High	Low	High
Parent conferences	Parents/ guardians	High	Low	High

4. Write the survey.

For tips on building surveys and meaningful survey questions, see section III. Note that the Survey Question Bank provides examples for this process.

5. Administer the survey.

When administering a survey, the goal should be to receive a large number of accurate responses. There are a number of factors that contribute to achieving these two things:

- *Timing* – Don’t distribute surveys before long breaks (e.g., vacations), too long after events you’re trying to measure (e.g., asking for feedback about the 1st day of school in February), or during stressful times (e.g., asking students to fill out surveys before major exams).
- *“Author” of the survey* – You’ll generally have better results if the person from whom the survey is sent is someone known and respected by recipients.
- *Bundling* – Including the survey with other important documents such as report cards is a helpful way to increase both participation and data fidelity. Be careful, however, not to bury the survey in the back of a 10-page newsletter.

6. Collect and compile the results.

Be sure to provide a quick and easy method for your target audience to return surveys, be it by including self-addressed, stamped return envelopes or by having a drop box at the front of the classroom. There should be a single point of accountability for collecting and inputting survey results.

If the survey is confidential, there will need to be mechanisms to ensure there is no way to connect responses to individuals. Common techniques include: collecting the surveys by a third party (volunteer or organization), absence of identifying questions (such as location, subgroup, etc.), and de-aggregating survey questions from each other to ensure respondents cannot be identified by the process of elimination. Note, however, that by de-aggregating questions, certain analyses will no longer be possible, such as understanding how parents in a certain neighborhood responded to a particular question.

7. Draw conclusions and report them.

In order to ensure future participation in surveys, be sure that survey participants are included in communications about the survey's results and resulting actions.

Ten tips for writing effective surveys

Describe the purpose of the survey in the introduction

Stakeholders are much more likely to take your survey seriously and take the time to fill it out if they understand how the results will be *used*. That is, if something they care about is likely to change based on the survey's results, you'll have a better response rate that would otherwise be possible.

Good examples	Bad examples
“This survey is designed to help us understand the experience you and your children have with the bus system so that we can adjust route schedules and bus quality accordingly.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “This is the annual bus survey.”• “This bus survey is for archival purposes only. If you have specific complaints about service, please refer them to the district office.”
“This anonymous survey is designed to assess your level of satisfaction with our school's response to questions/complaints. That includes your experience coming into the office, on the phone, and responsiveness to emails. We will share the anonymous results with you in two months' time along with our plan to address any areas for improvement that are identified.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “This survey is about your level of satisfaction with our support services. We appreciate your participation.”

Create a flow to the questions

The order in which questions are asked can have a real impact on survey outcome. Therefore, create a “flow” to your questions that starts more general and becomes specific

Below is a commonly used order for asking questions (in this example, for students):

1. Qualifying questions (e.g., “How long have you attended this school?”)
2. General/Overview questions (e.g., “Are you happy with our school's bus service overall? What rating would you give it on a scale of 1-10?”)
3. Specific questions (e.g., “Have you been affected by the recent cancelation of service on the Main Street Bus?”)
4. Demographic questions (e.g., “Would you classify yourself as African-American, Latino, Asian-American, ...”)
5. Additional comments question

Write questions that are simple and to the point

Avoid complex terminology, compound phrasing, and very long sentences.

Good examples	Bad examples
[For students] “Overall, how happy are you with the way your teacher deals with students who are misbehaving? (very happy, happy, unhappy, very unhappy)”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• [For students] “What level of satisfaction would you indicate fits best with your approval rating for the instructor’s method of addressing conflict in the classroom? (Greatly approve, approve, disapprove, greatly disapprove)”
[For parents/guardians] “How many times in the past year have you visited the school office at 123 4 th Street? (0, 1, 2, 3 or more)”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• [For parents/guardians] “We have found that very few parents are soliciting information from the school administration. If you had to estimate your number of visits to our place of operations, how many would you approximate? (0, 1, 2, 3 or more)”

Keep the survey as short as possible

When drafting your survey, distinguish between what is essential to know, what would be useful to know and what would be unnecessary. Retain the essential, keep the useful to a minimum and discard the rest. If the question is not important enough to include in your final report, it probably should be eliminated. As a general rule, surveys should take respondents no longer than 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

Ask one question at a time

Asking two questions at once confuses participants and confounds the results because analysts cannot decipher which of the questions the participant was answering.

Good example	Bad example
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• [For students] “How happy are you with the condition of the playground? (very happy, happy, unhappy, very unhappy)”• [For students] “How happy are you with the condition of the gym? (very happy, happy, unhappy, very unhappy)”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• [For students] “How happy are you with the condition of playground and gym? (very happy, happy, unhappy, very unhappy)”

Avoid overlap among response options

All options on the survey should be mutually exclusive to avoid confusion.

Good example	Bad example
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• [For staff] Which of the following best describes your role at the school (Teacher, Administrator, Maintenance Staff, Counselor, Teacher’s Aid) Or <ul style="list-style-type: none">• [For staff] Which of the following best describes your role at the school (Teacher, Administrator, Classified Staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• [For staff] Which of the following best describes your role at the school (Teacher, Administrator, Classified Staff, Maintenance Staff, Counselor, Teacher’s Aid) <p><i>Note the overlap between classified staff, Maintenance, and Teacher’s Aid.</i></p>

Offer an “out” for questions that are not applicable

Respondents may not want or may not be able to provide the information requested. If there is no option available for opting out, these responses will introduce randomness to your survey. Common options to include that allow respondents to plead ignorance include, “N/A (Not applicable),” “Don’t know,” or “No Answer.”

Weigh the benefits and drawbacks of allowing confidential responses

If your respondents are to be anonymous, then you will be unable to follow up or match "pre" or "post" surveys. However, in some cases, allowing anonymous responses will allow people to respond without pressure from others (including peers, colleagues, and supervisors).

Pilot the survey

Before publishing a live survey, publish a small pilot survey to check for questions that are ambiguous or confusing and to ensure that the survey is aesthetically pleasing.

Inform respondents of the survey end date and send out reminders

Encourage respondents to complete the survey as soon as possible, but let them know about the end date so that they can schedule the necessary time. Depending on the method used for the survey (email vs. mailing vs. other), follow-up reminders may be appropriate to increase the survey response rate. One to two reminders are generally enough to capture all respondents who intended to fill out the survey, but had forgotten.

How do I use the survey question bank to generate my own survey?

To use this tool effectively, simply use the arrows at the top of the Excel file to narrow your choices according to the survey you are trying to create. For example, if you are interested in creating a survey on school culture as viewed by students, an administrator could select “school culture” from the first drop-down column (**survey topic**) and then “student” from the third drop-down column (**stakeholder surveyed**). This would yield 80 relevant questions through which you could search for appropriate examples.

The following are descriptions of the categories (arranged by columns) included in the survey question bank. See [Appendix A](#) for the list of all options available within each category listed below.

- **Topic of Question** – describes the topic discussed by a particular question
- **Stakeholder Surveyed** – describes the stakeholder type who will be asked to respond.
- **Question** – the actual question included in the original survey
- **Source** – the district or organization from which the survey question originated
- **Survey Title** – contains the title of the survey from which the question was copied. If you would like to view a complete survey, please email tools@broadfoundation.org
- **Answer Choices** – answer choices for the questions are listed here.

Appendices

Appendix A: Options available under each category in the bank

Topic of Question	Stakeholder Surveyed	Source	Survey Title
Academics	Administrators	Aspire	2006-2007 School Satisfaction Survey
Accountability	All	CMS	2009 CMS Climate Survey
Administrators	All Staff	CPS	Annual School Opening Survey
Admissions	Classified Staff	DC Prep	Arts Survey
Advisor Quality	Network Executive Officer	Denver PS	Aspire Annual Team Member Survey
Alternative Education	Parent/Guardian	EFC	Central Services Principal Satisfaction Survey
Arts	Principals	Green Dot	Classified Staff
Assessments, research, and evaluation	Students	KIPP	Classified Staff Survey - Feedback on Animo
Assistant Principal	Teachers	Lighthouse	Classified Staff Survey on Principals and Aps
Athletics	Visitors	NYCDOE	D75 Parent Survey
Autonomy		OUSD	D75 Student Survey
		Uplift	
Benefits		Education	D75 Teacher Survey
Board		Yes Prep	Departmental Questionnaire
Central Office			Elementary School Student Survey
CMO			Faculty Survey
College Readiness			Healthy Schools Survey
College Readiness			How Are We Doing? School Questionnaire
Communications			My School, My Voice Parent Survey
Community Involvement			Network Executive Officer Survey
Counselors			Parent and Staff Satisfaction Survey
Customer Service			Parent Survey
Demographics			Parent Survey - Feedback on Animo
Discipline			Parent/Guardian Survey
District Services			Principal Survey
District/ CMO leadership			Principal Survey on Academics
Enrichment			Sample Survey
Enrichment			School Staff Survey
Enrichment			Secondary School Student Survey
Facilities			Service Area Employee Survey
Family Services			Service Area Manager Survey
Feedback and Self-Development			Student Survey
Finances			Student Survey - Feedback on Animo
Food Services			Student Survey Spring 2005
General Questions			Survey on Animo and Administrators
Health Services			Survey on Green Dot Home Office 2008
Human Resources			Teacher and Course Evaluation
Instructional Support			Teacher Survey
Legal			Teacher Survey - Feedback on Animo
Operations			Visitor Survey
Parents			
Partnerships/Collaboration			
Principals			
Professional Development			
Professional Learning Community			

Topic of Question	Stakeholder Surveyed	Source	Survey Title
Purchasing			
Recruitment			
Resources Available			
School Openings			
School Safety			
School/ District Culture			
Special Education Services			
Strategic Plan			
Student Achievement			
Student Recruitment			
Student Services			
Teachers			
Teaching & Learning			
Technology			
Transportation			
Work/Life Balance			

Appendix B: Aspire Public Schools annual survey for parents

PARENT/GUARDIAN SURVEY SPRING 2005 – OVERALL SCHOOL SURVEY

School Name _____

Your participation in this survey will help us make our school better! Your responses are completely anonymous. Therefore, please be as candid as possible. Thank you.

Si usted necesita una encuesta para padres en español contacte a Monica Ruiz en Aspire's Home Office (tel: 510-251-1660, ext. 114) y ella le enviará una.

I. ABOUT THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements about the school environment:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school has high standards for my student's academic achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
The school is safe.	1	2	3	4	5
The school is a caring and nurturing place.	1	2	3	4	5
As a parent/guardian, I feel welcome at the school.	1	2	3	4	5
I have opportunities for involvement at the school.	1	2	3	4	5
The school looks and feels like a place where learning occurs.	1	2	3	4	5
The school office is well run.	1	2	3	4	5
The school facilities are clean and well maintained.	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, the school is a good place to learn.	1	2	3	4	5

II. ABOUT THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements about the school's educational program:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school does a good job preparing my student for college.	1	2	3	4	5
The school does a good job of teaching my student basic skills (e.g. reading).	1	2	3	4	5
The school does a good job teaching my student "life skills" (e.g. responsibility).	1	2	3	4	5
The school tests are accurate measures of my student's academic performance.	1	2	3	4	5
The school provides individualized instruction for my student.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My student's school work and homework assignments are meaningful.	1	2	3	4	5
Student discipline is fair.	1	2	3	4	5
My student has a close relationship with at least one adult at the school.	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, I am satisfied with my student's academic progress.	1	2	3	4	5

III. ABOUT THE PRINCIPAL

Your feedback is an important part of an Aspire principal's annual performance evaluation.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The principal keeps the school focused on academic achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
The principal is knowledgeable about teaching and learning methods.	1	2	3	4	5
The principal is well organized.	1	2	3	4	5
The principal has excellent communications skills.	1	2	3	4	5
The principal deals with problems and conflicts in a fair manner.	1	2	3	4	5

Overall, what grade would you give to the principal?

- F: No Evidence
 D: Needs to Develop
 C: Approaches Standards
 B: Meets Standards
 A: Exceeds Standards

IV. Overall

Overall, what grade would you give to the school?

- F: No Evidence
 D: Needs to Develop
 C: Approaches Standards
 B: Meets Standards
 A: Exceeds Standards

Would you recommend this school to other families?

- Yes
 No
 Undecided

Do you plan to re-enroll your child again next year?

- Yes
 No
 Undecided

If not, why will your child not attend this school next year?

- Child/family is moving away from the area
 I am not satisfied with the school
 Child does not want to return
 Other (please specify): _____

What do you most appreciate about the school that you would like to be sure continues?:

What suggestions do you have for improvements at the school?:

PARENT SURVEY SPRING 2004– TEACHER EVALUATION.

Your feedback is an important part of an Aspire teacher's annual performance evaluation. On the following pages (FRONT AND BACK), please complete a separate evaluation for each of your children's teachers. If you need additional teacher evaluation forms, please contact Gloria Lee at Aspire's Home Office (phone: 510-251-1660, ext. 118).

What is the first and last name of the teacher you are evaluating:

The teacher....	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
manages the classroom effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
motivates my child to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
is knowledgeable about the subject matter.	1	2	3	4	5
is well-organized.	1	2	3	4	5
is sensitive to my child's individual learning style.	1	2	3	4	5
is sensitive to my child's emotional needs.	1	2	3	4	5
knows whether my child has mastered the topics covered in class.	1	2	3	4	5
encourages my student to develop to his/her potential.	1	2	3	4	5
communicates with me well about my child's progress.	1	2	3	4	5
deals with student discipline matters fairly.	1	2	3	4	5

Overall, what grade would you give to the teacher?

- F: No Evidence
 D: Needs to Develop
 C: Approaches Standards
 B: Meets Standards
 A: Exceeds Standards

General comments about the teacher:

Please continue evaluations on the back page.

What is the first and last name of the teacher you are evaluating:

The teacher....	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
manages the classroom effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
motivates my child to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
is knowledgeable about the subject matter.	1	2	3	4	5
is well-organized.	1	2	3	4	5
is sensitive to my child's individual learning style.	1	2	3	4	5
is sensitive to my child's emotional needs.	1	2	3	4	5
knows whether my child has mastered the topics covered in class.	1	2	3	4	5
encourages my student to develop to his/her potential.	1	2	3	4	5
communicates with me well about my child's progress.	1	2	3	4	5
deals with student discipline matters fairly.	1	2	3	4	5

Overall, what grade would you give to the teacher?

- F: No Evidence
 D: Needs to Develop
 C: Approaches Standards
 B: Meets Standards
 A: Exceeds Standards

General comments about the teacher:

What is the first and last name of the teacher you are evaluating:

The teacher....	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
manages the classroom effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
motivates my child to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
is knowledgeable about the subject matter.	1	2	3	4	5
is well-organized.	1	2	3	4	5
is sensitive to my child's individual learning style.	1	2	3	4	5
is sensitive to my child's emotional needs.	1	2	3	4	5
knows whether my child has mastered the topics covered in class.	1	2	3	4	5
encourages my student to develop to his/her potential.	1	2	3	4	5
communicates with me well about my child's progress.	1	2	3	4	5
deals with student discipline matters fairly.	1	2	3	4	5

Overall, what grade would you give to the teacher?

- F: No Evidence
 D: Needs to Develop
 C: Approaches Standards
 B: Meets Standards
 A: Exceeds Standards

General comments about the teacher:

