



Student Feedback Surveys

A Thoughtful and Purposeful Process



[Student feedback can be an essential tool](#) in creating a positive impact on both teaching and learning. Student survey feedback tracks consistency over time and showcases the student's experience in the classroom. It can show patterns and support teachers in improving practice and achieving their goals. Student survey feedback can be used to affirm work that is being done well and to help teachers identify areas for professional growth and development. Student feedback is also essential to the student learning experience. Creating a tool for students to have their voices heard gives them ownership of their learning and an opportunity for them to reflect on the ways they learn.

As the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation [Measuring Effectiveness in Teaching](#) (MET) Project notes: "No one has a bigger stake in teaching effectiveness than students. Nor are there any better experts on how teaching is experienced by its intended beneficiaries."¹

To Begin:

In order for student survey feedback to meet its intended goal as a tool to support teacher growth, it is important for school leaders to engage the central stakeholders -- teachers -- in the process and conversation from the beginning. For student feedback to be effective, [teachers need to buy into the process](#) for collecting data and the reasons for surveying students.

Take time in your faculty meetings to share the purpose behind each question on the survey, and to allow teachers to ask their own questions and voice any concerns about the structure and content of the survey. Well-designed surveys should capture instruction and the classroom environment. Involving teachers in the discussion underlines the purpose of student feedback as support for their progress in their teaching practice. In faculty meetings, make the link between student survey feedback and professional growth explicit and offer support and resources toward progress on identified goals. As the MET Project notes: "Teachers should have access to professional development resources that will help them target improvement in areas of need."²

Survey Design:

In the [myFolio platform, student surveys](#) have three sections: adjectives, questions, and an optional narrative; schools can customize the adjectives and questions to align with stated themes, initiatives, and priorities for the school year.

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<https://usprogram.gatesfoundation.org/-/media/dataimport/resources/pdf/2016/11/asking-students-practitioner-brief.pdf>

² Ibid.



As administrators design student feedback surveys, it is critically important to “measure what matters” and focus on instruction and the classroom environment.³ Well-crafted survey questions ask about only one topic at a time using clear language, without double negatives.⁴

As schools look to develop their adjectives and questions, here are several different established survey constructs to inspire your design process. For each of the below, an individual school might use the categories and domains as is, or might use them as exemplars in creating a school-specific list.

- [The Tripod Project Surveys](#)⁵ -- Focus on the 7 C’s to capture the essential elements of instructional practice. The 7 C’s are divided into three categories:
 - ◆ Student-Teacher Relationship -- Creating an environment where students “feel valued and welcomed”⁶
 - Care
 - Confer
 - ◆ Curricular Support -- Making the curriculum “engaging, accessible, and coherent”⁷
 - Captivate
 - Consolidate
 - Clarify
 - ◆ Classroom Conditions -- Creating conditions to help students achieve their potential
 - Challenge
 - Classroom Management
- [Youth Truth Student Surveys](#) -- Keep the 7 C’s and add two “R’s”:
 - ◆ Rigor
 - ◆ Relationships
- My Student Survey (from Vanderbilt University) -- Focus on the “6 Teacher Constructs”⁸ and ask students to evaluate their teacher based on each dimension.
 - ◆ Presenter
 - ◆ Manager
 - ◆ Counselor
 - ◆ Coach

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid, p. 13.

⁵ The Tripod Project Surveys come from a partnership between Cambridge Education and Dr. Robert Ferguson of Harvard University (<https://usprogram.gatesfoundation.org/-/media/dataimport/resources/pdf/2016/12/student-perceptions-092110.pdf>)

⁶ <https://www.tripoded.com/teacher-toolkit/>

⁷ Ibid

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<https://usprogram.gatesfoundation.org/-/media/dataimport/resources/pdf/2016/11/asking-students-practitioner-brief.pdf>, p. 10.



- ◆ Content Expert
 - ◆ Motivational Speaker
- Your school could design its own survey to measure what matters in your community. “Measuring what matters also means capturing aspects of teaching and the learning environment that relate to desired student outcomes.”⁹ Some potential key phrases might include:
- ◆ Positive Pedagogy
 - ◆ Student Engagement
 - ◆ Cooperative Learning Environment
 - ◆ Critical Thinking
 - ◆ Efficacy
 - ◆ Add your own...

As a sample, translating these to the Folio adjectives or questions on the student feedback survey, a school could include words or descriptors like:

- Adjective: “Captivating -- Sparks and Maintains student interest in learning”¹⁰
- Question: “This class keeps my attention; I don’t get bored”¹¹
- Adjective: “Challenging -- Presses for rigorous thinking, quality work, persistence; Insists that students do their best work”¹²
- Question: “My teacher wants us to use our thinking skills, not just memorize things.”¹³

Teachers talk to students:

Teachers give students feedback all the time. Allowing students to provide feedback to their teachers is a way for teachers to [model how to receive feedback](#). Teachers should share with their classes that the survey feedback is important in helping them to [improve from year to year](#). Asking for student feedback shows students that their voices matter in the process of designing their education. Teachers should create space for students to ask questions about what teachers will do with the data they gather and about how the survey will maintain their confidentiality. If teachers are administering the survey during class time, teachers need to set a quiet space and ample time for every student to be thoughtful. If students are taking the survey outside of class, teachers should identify the survey as that night’s only homework assignment, allowing students to take the time they need to complete it thoughtfully and thoroughly.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ <https://www.tripoded.com/teacher-toolkit/>

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<https://usprogram.gatesfoundation.org/-/media/dataimport/resources/pdf/2016/12/student-perceptions-092110.pdf>

¹² <https://www.tripoded.com/teacher-toolkit/>

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<https://usprogram.gatesfoundation.org/-/media/dataimport/resources/pdf/2016/12/student-perceptions-092110.pdf>



Consider having a script available for teachers to read to the students prior to sending surveys. Share with students why they are being asked to complete a survey and what role it plays in instruction and teacher goals. Let students know that their individual survey is anonymous, only overall results can be reviewed by the teacher, and whoever else has visibility: Supervisor, Head of School, Folio Admin, etc. Your script will vary based on what you have included in your Survey Form: Adjectives, Questions, and Narrative Prompt. Of course, with myFolio (or any other platform), it is important to remind students of the limits of anonymity: comments that express threats to self or another can be identified with help from the software vendor.

Using surveys as a tool for teacher growth:

Once the survey window has closed, teachers and their supervisors (depending on the school's specific configurations in myFolio) will have direct access to their student feedback data. In order for student feedback to have its intended impact on teacher growth, a conversation with their administrator that includes appreciation feedback and [a collaborative approach to reflection and goal-setting would be ideal](#). "Rare are the individuals who get better at something by themselves. For most people, improvement requires the example and expertise of others. While student surveys can help point to areas for improvement, they can't answer the question: Now what? Motivation without guidance is a recipe for frustration."¹⁴

Absent the opportunity for a collaborative conversation, teachers are liable to focus their attention on the numerical data from the Likert scales that feels more evaluative rather than seeing the positives and the moments for coaching from the narrative and responses. Conversation and structured reflection give teachers the critical "opportunity to engage meaningfully with their results."¹⁵ One possible reflective question might ask teachers to focus on both their highest and lowest rated adjectives on the Likert scales. Making comparisons between items that students rated positively and those rated toward the other end of the scale might be one question that could be posed for further reflection.¹⁶

Administrators can begin their collaborative conversations by looking back at the teacher's goals for the year. If the teacher set a goal of having a classroom centered more on student conversation, how did the students reflect on this aspect of the classroom culture? It is important to read through the survey data collaboratively with the teacher to find coaching themes to separate from the moments that are more evaluative in structure. This is also a good time to remember the value of "appreciation feedback" and sharing the moments of appreciation in the surveys.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 21.

¹⁵ <http://www.coloradoinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/CEI-SPS-Guide.pdf>, p. 9.

¹⁶ *Tools for Teaching*, p. 403.



Teachers share thoughts with students:

A great feedback cycle comes back to the classroom to give the teacher time to share what they have learned with their students. This is the time to say to students “I heard you and these are the ways I will shift this next year.” If the students were in consensus that one unit or lesson just did not work for their learning, this is the time to let them know how it will be tweaked for next year. If there isn’t a plan just yet, [students should know that this will be a part of the summer work -- to make that lesson more relevant or interesting.](#) This is when teachers can share that they will be moving on from that one text, ditching that poem/short story, or expanding their understanding of this one perspective in order to level up their teaching. If the cycle of collecting student feedback comes too close to the end of the school year to allow for meaningful reflection, teachers can begin the new year by discussing with their classes the ways they learned and shifted over the summer in response to the past year’s student feedback, or questions they’ll be exploring this year in their practice, based on last year’s feedback. This allows the new year to start by showing students that their voices matter in the process, which will in turn create benefits when their student feedback surveys are collected several months down the line.

Back to teacher goal setting this fall:

As teachers look toward creating their goals for the coming year, they should use student feedback to inform at least one of their goals. When administrators and teachers sit down for goals meetings, reflect back to the student feedback data from the year before. Ask: “What did you learn about your teaching practice that you want to enhance, keep doing, and make even stronger?” Then ask: “What did you learn about your teaching practice that is worth tweaking, shifting, or approaching differently this year?” Helping teachers reflect on their practice allows them to set positive and achievable goals for the next school year.

