Community Engagement Survey Resource Guide

Introduction

This resource has been developed to supplement the Aligning for Student Success: Integrated Guidance for Aligning Six ODE Initiatives and offers district, school, and program leaders curated information on best practices for surveying communities to accompany a bank of survey questions for students, families, school staff, and community members.

Between this guide and the bank of questions, ODE is offering leaders a customizable tool to adapt to meet the individual needs of their communities. The resource that follows can help you make the most of your efforts!

Survey results can be used as part of ongoing engagement to inform investments prioritized in the 2023-25 Integrated Plan and Budget, to be submitted in March 2023. Leaders are encouraged to pull survey questions into the tool or platform typically used by their district, school, or program.

Surveys should not be an applicant's only community engagement strategy, particularly for focal students and their families. Appendix A: Community Engagement Toolkit offers additional strategies for more robust community engagement, including ideas for moving along the spectrum for better follow-through, closer collaboration, mutual learning, and deeper engagement with communities. Surveys can be a powerful "level 2" engagement strategy to receive data and input, however surveys should be one aspect of a broader community engagement effort to support integrated plan development.

Table of Contents

Outreach and Rollout Best Practices

Ideally, surveys are developed and distributed in ways that reach and are accessible to focal student groups, their families, and staff, ensuring that all have the opportunity to participate. Applicants (an inclusive terms used in this guide to refer to districts, charter schools, and other eligible grantees under the Integrated Guidance) will benefit by working with their team to provide adequate translations or interpretations to meet the needs of their linguistically diverse communities. Applicants should also provide appropriate accommodations to families and students with disabilities.

Survey Planning and Format

Surveys to staff, community members, families, and students work best when thoughtfully designed, formatted, and sequenced in order to maximize relationship and participation[1]. Consider these strategies to grow trust and demonstrate respect toward the potential survey participants:

- **Test for understanding, format, and the average time for survey completion.** Your curated survey from the bank of questions could be piloted with a small group of individuals prior to full rollout. You can ask this group for feedback on wording, ease of use, and the time it took to complete. Consider including the estimated completion time in your communication to potential participants, and adjusting the number and complexity of questions you ask to aim for a survey completion time under 10 minutes.
- **Don't overburden participants with too many surveys.** Consider combining surveys or changing some to listening sessions, interviews, or focal groups. Rich conversations with smaller groups of people may result in more substantial and useful information.
- **Have a plan for analysis and response.** Prior to sending out the survey for responses, have a plan in place for who will analyze the data and how and when it will be shared back with the community. Right-size the number and types of questions for your analysis – for example, limit open-ended questions to match your capacity for analysis. Engagement around the analysis of survey data is a higher-level strategy within the spectrum of engagement.

Rollout

Partnering with community leaders throughout your entire survey development can help ensure that a survey is culturally relevant. You can also coordinate with partners to promote or administer the survey at existing community events or through other existing channels. Consider these approaches:

[1] For more information, see Survey Error and Response Bias Problems.

- **Make the survey available in multiple formats, languages, and opportunities.** Consider surveys formatted for web browsers, smartphones, telephone, and mail, and translate to all languages that may be needed. Consider providing tablets with the survey loaded at community engagement events. Have a QR code displayed in places where parents wait for their kids. For students, give them opportunities during the school day. Ensure that mail surveys can be returned in a pre-paid and addressed envelope, or directly to the school (e.g. in drop boxes).
- **Reach out ahead of time.** Reach out through email, newsletter, mail, or any other communication tools available, to let your audience know to expect to receive a survey on or near a certain date.[2]
- **Clearly explain the purpose of the survey.** People are less likely to respond to a survey if they believe it serves no purpose. Research has found that the number one driver of survey fatigue was the perception that the organization wouldn't act on the results.[3] Explain the goal of the survey, how the results will be used and will impact their community, and how the results will be shared back to them. Ensure that you follow through on those commitments. Particularly, explain the purpose of questions around demographics and other potentially identifying information. Include a statement within your survey that details why you are asking for demographic information and how that information will be protected so they will not be identified in future sharing.

Follow-up

Sending out periodic reminders before your survey window closes and making sure to follow up on the information respondents provide helps give the survey value. Here's a few other follow-up tips:

- **Send a couple of email reminders to those who haven't responded yet.** Do not send them to people who have already responded if you can help it.
- **Be poised for further outreach** to groups that have historically had lower response rates. Track ongoing response rates by demographic groups. Plan increased community outreach for groups that aren't filling out the survey. Work with your community leaders to brainstorm culturally-respectful ways to reach out.
- **Follow through** with sharing the results on the date you aimed for or, if unexpected circumstances prevent that, communicate about the shift with the new share out date.

[2] This is especially important when the survey is coming from a sender that is not clearly connected to your school or district because they may not trust that it is a legitimate survey.

[3] Survey Fatigue? Blame the leader, not the question. McKinsey and Company.

Use of Funds for Survey Creation and Administration

The bank of survey questions may connect with areas of need to be addressed in a recipient's Integrated Plan. Applicants may utilize funds from either the Student Investment Account (SIA) or High School Success (HSS)[4] to support staff time for survey creation, administration, and data analysis, as well as any printing or delivery costs associated with administering the surveys. When including the engagement survey as an activity in an Integrated Plan, the necessary funds should be charged to the Ongoing Community Engagement spending category for SIA and/or the Dropout Prevention spending category for HSS.

How to Use the Item Bank

The purpose of this item bank is to provide support for applicants to make individualized decisions around what types of questions to ask their communities. Not every question will be appropriate or helpful for every applicant. We encourage you to consider what you need to know and why, as well as how that information will be put to use, when deciding whether a question is appropriate for inclusion in your survey.

Item Design

Four banks of questions are available for use: student, student's family/caregiver, school/district staff, and community members. Questions are organized within six domains:

1. school culture and climate
2. communication and engagement
3. student/staff relationships
4. pedagogical effectiveness
5. school environment
6. school-sponsored activities

The staff survey includes two additional domains:

7. educating all students
8. feedback, coaching, and leadership.

The majority of questions in this item bank are Likert-type questions: respondents select their level of agreement with each statement on a scale of 1 to 5:

1: strongly disagree	2: disagree	3: neither agree nor disagree	4: agree	5: strongly agree

Each domain also contains 2-3 open-ended questions. These open-ended questions allow respondents to provide more information by expanding on topics in greater depth and detail.

Finally, some questions included in the Community Engagement Survey Item Bank are tightly aligned to questions applicants will need to respond to in Integrated Application, including some questions designed to meet Perkins V (CTE) application requirements. Applicants for Perkins funds should strongly consider including relevant questions in surveys, or otherwise

[4] HSS funds may only be used if the survey represents a new or expanded strategy since December 2016.

ensuring that they have a mechanism in place to gather the necessary information to successfully inform their planning.

Survey Length

Time to complete the survey may vary by the age of the respondent, level of familiarity with the method of administration, and any additional supports that may be needed. Students in middle or high school could be expected to complete the full survey, with open-ended responses and no supports, on a computer within 30 minutes. The family and staff survey will need a similar time frame to complete. To keep the time commitment to the recommended 10 minutes, applicants will need to narrow down the questions to those they determine to be most appropriate for their needs.

Language and Vocabulary Choices

Surveys work best when they use asset based and inclusive language and ensure the participants understand the vocabulary. Using plain language and simple content, and including a glossary of terms and an explanation of language used, will bring context to the questions and help participants understand what they are being asked.

Protecting and Honoring Confidentiality

Applicants are broadly required to ensure that their community engagement reflects a representative cross-section of their community, and to evaluate results for evidence of disparate needs or impacts experienced by some student groups. At the same time, applicants should limit the amount of identifiable information collected in order to ethically respect participant confidentiality, receive authentic responses, and in some cases comply with applicable regulations.

Personally identifiable information (PII) is generally thought of as directly identifying information, such as a person's name. However, less direct information, such as demographic identifiers, may also put individuals at risk of being identified within the dataset, especially when it is gathered in combination with other factors.[5] This risk may continue even when data has been aggregated, if the aggregations represent small groups or high levels of agreement.

Important Considerations in Privacy

- **Authentic Speech.** Survey respondents may be less likely to respond candidly and openly to your questions when they fear being identifiable, particularly in the case of a survey where their responses may be stored verbatim. Respondents may feel

[5] For example, consider the case of a moderate-sized district with about 1,600 students. Asking recipients to identify a few common demographics (race/ethnicity, attending school, special education status, enrolled grade, and gender) would uniquely identify nearly 90 individual students, and put about ⅓ of the total student body in easily re-identifiable small groups. Those most at risk of being re-identified are generally also students in multiple focal populations, when those focal populations represent smaller student groups.

uncomfortable voicing criticism of the school which they rely upon for services for themselves and/or their children.

- **Secure Storage.** Survey respondents should be able to trust that applicants are not collecting information beyond what is needed, and that their responses will be stored securely, accessed only by authorized individuals, and destroyed in accordance with record retention schedules.
- **Legality.** The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment is a federal law that requires districts to notify parents (and students over the age of 18) and obtain their consent for any surveys asking for specific types of information. Consult with your legal counsel to ensure your surveys are conducted in compliance with this law.

Best Practices

Survey participants have given you their time and thoughts, sometimes on sensitive topics, in trust that you will handle these data with the care and consideration that they deserve. These additional best practices can honor that trust:

- **Make questions optional** whenever possible, particularly when the question regards a sensitive topic or may expose personally identifiable information.
- Consider whether your needs may be served by **combining focal group populations** into a single question.[6] This will reduce your ability to disaggregate the data, but may increase the comfort of your respondents.
- **Use a trusted intermediary**, such as a community organization, Education Service District (ESD), affinity group, or higher education partner, to gather and aggregate the survey responses, so that individual survey responses are not visible to applicants.
- **Consider alternative methods** to engage sensitive focal populations, such as by conducting engagement sessions and focus groups to gather themes. A survey may not be the best choice for all questions or all communities.
- **Collect contact information separately when it is needed**. This can be done by providing a link to sign up for more information at the end of the survey, rather than asking for contact information within the survey, in order to decouple the contact information from the survey responses.
- **Store responses securely and dispose of data when it is no longer needed**. Responses and unsuppressed analysis should be stored securely in order to prevent external users from accessing them, but also restricted internally to those personnel who have a legitimate business need to view them. Record retention policies and laws should be followed with respect to all data. Destroying data that is no longer needed helps protect the privacy of your respondents.

[6] For example, "Do you consider yourself part of any of the following groups") with a binary (yes or no) response.

Analysis

Once data collection is complete, analysts must make sense of the data in a way that is easy for everyone to understand. The analysis done will vary depending on the number of responses, the types of questions included, your team's skill level with analysis, and the intended audience for your results. Before proceeding to analysis, you may find it helpful to organize and clean your data.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative analysis (mathematical and statistical analysis) of a survey is useful to determine how widespread opinion is or where there is concentrated agreement in respondents. This type of analysis is useful for the multiple-choice items in the item bank, but is generally inappropriate for the open-ended items, for which Qualitative Analysis should be used instead.

Scale Matters. The Likert-style questions allow you to easily group the responses into Positive and Negative responses. So, you could make statements like "XX% of the student respondents of color answered positively that there were mental health systems of support in place at their school."

Basic Numerical Analysis. One option to consider is treating a Likert scale numerically, assigning 1 through 5 to the ordered responses. This then allows you to find the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation of the responses.[7]

More information is available in Appendix B: Methods of Numerical Analysis.

Qualitative Analysis

The most effective way to approach analyzing qualitative data, such as that obtained from the open-ended questions in this survey bank, is through the identification of key themes. Themes are recurring topics or ideas that appear in the answers of multiple respondents. Here are a few best practices you can follow to make the process go smoothly:

1. **Complete your Quantitative Analysis first.** Having a good preliminary grasp of the results from quantitative data may indicate what to look for or potential themes.
2. **Read the responses to the open-ended questions.** Take some time to simply read these responses, one question at a time, without attempting to analyze or code them. What stands out to you? What are some of the themes that emerge across survey responses?
3. **Generate a list of possible themes and assign working definitions to those themes.** It is important to define the themes you are generating so that the people coding responses can remain consistent throughout the analysis.

[7] Note that this method of analysis assumes that all responses are evenly spaced (for example, that the difference between "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" is equivalent to the difference between "Disagree" and "Neutral." This assumption may not be accurate.

4. **Code the survey response data according to the themes you identify.** Select one of the open-ended questions and examine the responses one by one. Highlight words or phrases in the responses that can serve as evidence for particular themes. You may also want to keep a frequency count to track how many times each theme arises. Often, it is helpful to have a small team involved in coding; see Appendix D: Intercoder Reliability.
5. **Compile the analysis.** Your analysis should discuss the importance of the theme, how it was identified and coded, and provide a clear description and definition of the theme. In your analysis, include specific evidence, especially direct quotations, from the qualitative data you have collected.

Going Further

This section discusses some suggested deeper analyses (for those with capacity) that may help to inform both your planning process and future survey development.

Disaggregation of Responses. Disaggregation, or conducting the analyses above on the responses from specific demographic groups, may help to reveal pockets of information very important to some populations that would otherwise be obscured. This is more commonly a concern with smaller populations, or when there is substantial disagreement between groups on a question.

Disaggregation may also help you can spot differences in responses for student groups and families that have been historically marginalized–we want to elevate these voices to make sure that every student and family feels welcome and supported in our schools.

If your survey collected responses disproportionately compared to your population, consider Survey Weighting. If your survey collected very few responses from a specific demographic group, numerical analysis may not be appropriate due to both statistical and privacy concerns, and you may need to pursue other methods, such as focus groups, in order to gain insight into those groups.

Analyzing Across Survey Versions. The item bank for this survey has questions of a similar nature in broad domains, so you can select the questions most appropriate for your context while still covering a lot of content if selecting at least one question from each domain. These domains are consistent across the different survey versions (student, staff/teacher, etc.) so that you can review responses from a number of different types of respondents that are asking similar questions.

It is helpful to look at responses within versions, but it's also helpful to look across versions on the same domain. Often, finding places where there is a disconnect between responses by respondent type will highlight places where more communication and engagement are needed.

Appendix A: Data Cleaning

If you have any paper survey responses, your first step will be to input those responses into a spreadsheet or database. Be sure to include all relevant information from each survey, including the type of survey administered (student, staff, etc.).

With survey responses in a language other than the one that the analyst/analysis team uses, utilize a trusted translator who is well-versed in the context of education. It's important that the translation be culturally-attuned to catch nuances in language that a simple translation application/software is unable to master.

Cleaning Response Data

1. **Make a backup.** Make a copy of the responses prior to any alterations and keep the original as read-only. The original and all versions must be stored securely.
2. **Remove Duplicate Responses.** If the survey includes open-ended/narrative questions and responses are worded identically, it is probable that it was an accidental duplication and one of the responses can be removed from analysis. Otherwise, keep all responses even if you suspect that there may be duplicates.
3. **Establish a Review Process for Questionable Responses.** One of the trickiest parts of survey analysis is determining which responses are real and which ones should be removed from analysis, based on both the overall pattern of responses throughout the survey and on specific responses to open-ended questions.
   Some respondents will use the survey as an opportunity to give feedback on things that aren't relevant to the question asked, leave a response blank, or answering with a refusal to respond or an unintelligible response. Be careful not to remove responses that do address the question based on formatting or word choice alone.
   Consider first that the person analyzing the response may not have the context or cultural knowledge to understand how the response is, indeed, responding to the question. Establish a process to elevate these responses to a team for review before removing them from analysis, or consider whether the information provided may be useful elsewhere.

Analysis of Invalid Responses

Track the number of responses that had to be removed by question. If you find that one question received a lot of invalid responses, consider additional review or modifications. If you had a lot of valid responses at the beginning of your survey and they decreased as the survey progressed, it may be a sign of survey fatigue: shortening surveys in the future may produce higher-quality data.

Appendix B: Methods of Numerical Analysis

Each of these statistical analyses are useful in different ways; however, you should be careful to make sure that when sharing the information that it is accessible to your audience. Analyses that the team shares with administrators may be more technical than what they share with the public.

- Percentage or Proportion: This is a measure of how many individuals answered in a given way. Proportions can be calculated by summing the number of responses in the relevant categories (e.g. “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”) and dividing by the total number of responses. For example, if we had responses of [1, 3, 4, 4, 5], we could say that 20% of respondents strongly disagreed and 60% strongly agreed.
- Median: The middle response when you order the responses from lowest to highest. For example, if you had 10 responses of: [1, 1, 2, 3, 3, 3, 4, 5, 5, 5] the median would be 3.
- Mean/Average**:** The average response is calculated by summing all the responses and dividing by the number of responses. Let’s say we got responses of [4, 5, 3, 5]. Summed, those equal 17. Divide 17 by 4 responses to get an average response of 4.25. Both the median and the mean can obscure non-central patterns within the data (for example, if half of your respondents answered “5: strongly agree” and the other half “1: strongly disagree,” your mean and median would both be 3, obscuring the real disagreement present in your data).
- Mode: This is the most frequent response. If we had responses of [1, 1, 1, 4, 4, 5, 5] the mode is 1 because we have the most of that response. Note that, as in this example, using the mode may obscure highly polarized responses or responses that are in general but not exact agreement. In the example above, 4/7 of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, although the mode is 1 (strongly disagree).
- Standard Deviation: This is a measure of how concentrated around the mean/average the responses fall. If there is a lot of variation in responses, the standard deviation will be large. If the responses are all pretty similar then the standard deviation will be small.
- Correlation: This is a measure of how much responses to two different items tend to agree or disagree. For example, you might be interested in knowing whether students who agree that their teachers support their learning also tend to agree that they understand how they are being graded or evaluated. A strong positive correlation would indicate that people who agree with one item also tend to agree with the other (and disagree, respectively). A strong negative correlation would indicate that people who agree with one item tend to disagree with the other, and vice versa. Very strongly correlated items may indicate opportunities to reduce survey length by eliminating one of the items.

Appendix C: Survey Weighting

Non-response or disproportionate response rates by demographic group can cause data to be ungeneralizable.[8] Tools for increasing representative response rates are detailed in the Outreach and Rollout Best Practices section, as the best way to make sure all voices are heard is to gather information from all voices.

If, however, the response rates for some of your demographic groups are lower than the population proportions would lead you to expect, but you believe responses within those groups are representative of those populations as a whole, weighting is an option during the analysis portion of your process. Weighting refers to increasing or decreasing how much the responses of a group count to adjust overall group statistics to more accurately reflect your population as a whole. One method is presented here, but other more complex methods exist.

Example: Cell weighting by Race/Ethnicity

You have 100 teachers at a school and you sent your survey to all of them. Your staff makeup is 20 Hispanic/Latino/a/x teachers, 60 white teachers, 5 Black/African American teachers, 10 Asian teachers, and 5 American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) teachers. However, you only got 82 responses to the survey. 4 of the Asian teachers didn't respond, as well as 8 Hispanic teachers, 1 American Indian/Alaska Native teachers, and 5 White teachers. You can weight the responses of the individuals that did respond to account for those that didn't, if you can assume that the responses you did get are representative of the members of those groups as a whole.

	Hispanic	White	Black	Asian	AI/AN	Total
Staff Numbers	20 (20%)	60 (60%)	5 (5%)	10 (10%)	5 (5%)	100
Response Numbers	12 (14.6%)	55 (67%)	5 (6%)	6 (7.3%)	4 (4.9%)	82
Weight	1.4	0.9	0.8	1.4	1.0	

To calculate the weight, divide the percentage of the staff numbers by the percentage of the responses. You would then apply that weight to your results.[9]

Note that this method will not help adjust for a demographic group that is entirely missing from your survey results.

[8] When the results of a survey are not representative of your community as a whole, because of underlying differences between survey respondents and nonrespondents.

[9] For more information, see How to Weight Survey Data

Appendix D: Intercoder Reliability

Inter-coder reliability (ICR) can improve both the internal quality and external reception of qualitative studies. ICR, within the scope of qualitative research, is a measure of the consistency or repeatability of how codes are applied to qualitative data by multiple coders. Essentially, it is the extent to which independent coders evaluate the data and reach the same conclusions.

Here are a few best practices to consider when utilizing ICR:

- **Employ at least 2 coders in your analysis.** The use of more than one coder/researcher will reduce the potential for bias.
- **Take thorough notes and document the process of analysis for improved transparency and communication.** Each coder should be thorough in their note taking and keep well-documented records of their process in order to better communicate and share their thought-process and guide conversations with other coders.
- **Develop a strong system for check-ins and feedback loops during the qualitative coding process to ensure consistency.** Establish a regular and frequent system for checking in on the process as you move through the data to ensure that codes are consistent and aligned.
- **Be Reflexive: Make adjustments as necessary to the coding process as you go.** Reflexive, open communication amongst coders is necessary in order to create a shared understanding of the data. If you find that coders are not aligned during check-ins, pause and revisit the work to ensure consistency.