

# STRATEGIES FOR GATHERING STUDENT FEEDBACK

Students are the best source of information about what is working to help them learn and feel supported. Use this tool to develop a simple strategy to learn from students to continuously improve instruction to better meet their needs.

## Methods for Gathering Feedback

**Survey:** Using a paper or online survey is a quick way to gather feedback from a large number of students, but if the survey is optional you may not receive responses from a representative group, survey results may be unreliable for younger students, and it can be difficult to get responses to more complex, open-ended questions.

**One-on-one check ins:** If you are able to [check in with students individually](#), include a question in your discussion to learn more about their experience of specific class activities or assignments, or about their feelings about the class as a whole.

**Focus group:** Conducting an in-person, phone, or video interview with a small group of students can generate more detailed responses as students build on each other's answers and feel less "on-the-spot" than they might in a one-on-one conversation. Be intentional about bringing together a diverse group that is likely to have different perspectives and have different groups of friends.

**Class circle:** While you may or may not be able to physically form a circle, a [circle discussion](#) can be a good way to begin or wrap up a week with students by building community and reflecting. As you plan prompts for your circle discussion, include questions to gather feedback you can use to improve instruction. If conducting a circle during a video conference, let students know how you will determine the order of sharing so everyone knows who will speak before them and no one is left out.

**Exit question or journal prompt:** You are likely familiar with the "exit slip" where students answer a final question on a slip of paper or verbally as they leave the classroom. If you are not regularly in class with all your students, add your feedback questions to the end of other assignments so they answer as they finish their work. If you have students keep a journal, use a journal prompt to hear from them about their experience and ideas to improve class.

**Integrate into academic activity:** Involve students in data analysis. With younger students you might choose a question as a class, have students interview their peers, and then graph and discuss results. With older students, consider sharing de-identified data about assignment completion or attendance over time, and have students analyze results and plan a follow-up survey to learn more about the root causes of the patterns they see.

**For younger students:** If you teach in an early elementary setting, surveying students or asking for their perspectives may be unreliable since, developmentally, they have less ability to accurately self-evaluate. Many measures of PreK-3rd grade children rely on observations of adults (read more [here](#)). On the following page, you'll see ideas for using observation to learn from your students. If students are learning at home, consider surveying their caregivers in a way that probes for their child's perceptions – for example, identifying learning activities that lead to frustration or higher engagement, or times of day when they are most focused and calm versus energetic and needing to move.



## Sample Feedback Topics

The following topics will help gain an understanding of how students are experiencing the classroom climate and instruction. Beneath each topic you'll see different ways you could learn from students about this topic through observation, through discussion, or with a survey. As you generate your own strategy and questions, keep in mind that the list of questions should be brief, and should be written in student-friendly language in a way that is relatively easy to answer.

### Are students' learning needs being met through the teaching and learning strategies you're using now?

- **Observation example:** Review data of who is and isn't turning in assignments, and the relative quality of the work. Are students who are missing work those who have often struggled or those who have often excelled in the past? Compare work quality between assignments that are completed in different ways – for example, if using a blended learning model, are students doing higher quality work when instruction was given in person or virtually? When they are doing individual or collaborative work? What kinds of assignments are getting the best results?
- **Discussion example:** Think about what school was like last school year, before school closed, compared with how it is now. Do you feel like it is harder to learn, easier to learn, or the same as before? Why?
- **Survey example:** When I do school work at home, the work is...
  - A. Way too easy
  - B. A little too easy
  - C. Just right
  - D. A little too difficult
  - E. Way too difficult

### Do students feel cared for and connected to peers and adults at the school?

- **Observation example:** Review data that reflects participation including attendance, engagement with group message boards, chats, or virtual discussions, sharing during class meetings, and choices students make when a range of options are offered for demonstrating learning or playing during recess.
- **Discussion example:** If you had a problem or something you were worried about, is there an adult at our school you would feel comfortable talking to about it? Who would you pick and why?
- **Survey example:** When we have class meetings, I feel...
  - A. Mostly interested; I like hearing from everybody
  - B. Mostly bored; it takes a long time to hear from everybody
  - C. Mostly nervous; I'm worried what people will think of me when I talk
  - D. Mostly comfortable; I feel like we can tell each other what is on our minds



## What are students finding most valuable and helpful?

- **Observation example:** Pay attention to when students are mostly 'tuned in', whether that means tracking on-task behavior in-person, watching engagement with online learning, or responding to messages you send home. What is generating the most enthusiastic discussion and high-quality work?
- **Discussion example:** You've been joining our virtual class meetings regularly – and it's been so good to see you and hear from you! What is it that motivates you to join each time? What are the best parts of our meetings? For classmates who haven't been able to join as regularly, what do you think they are missing?
- **Survey example:** On a scale of 1 to 3, please rate the following things we have been doing in class.
  - 1 = Not helpful, let's stop doing this.
  - 2 = This is fine, I feel neutral about this.
  - 3 = This is helpful, let's do more like this.

## What problems are students seeing?

- **Observation example:** Pay attention to times students seem frustrated, disengaged, or act out. While the root cause may be an issue that is unique to the individual, it may also be connected to the classroom context. Is there a pattern of when this happens? What type of instruction is occurring? What kinds of activities the students are being asked to do?
- **Discussion example:** When you talk to your friends about how school is going so far this year, what are the most common complaints you hear?
- **Survey example:** On a scale of 1 to 5 (1= terrible, 5= great), how do you feel about this school year so far? What needs to change to make it better?

## What do students want to do differently?

- **Observation example:** Watch for moments when students challenge the parameters of the activities or assignments they are given, moments they seem hesitant, or times when they ask lots of clarifying questions. Use those moments to ask students if they have a different idea for how to show their understanding or accomplish the same objective.
- **Discussion example:** This is an especially difficult year for all of us, and it's more important than ever that our class is a place where everyone feels welcome, comfortable, and like an important part of the group. What do you think we should do to make sure everyone feels that way?
- **Survey example:** (Open ended question at the end of an assignment) Now that you have finished this assignment, what would have made it easier to understand? More interesting? Can you think of a different way to demonstrate what you are learning?

