



INTRODUCING SURVEYS TO STUDENTS

Today most students are accustomed to completing surveys at school, especially in school districts and provinces that have developed their own satisfaction or effective school surveys. Students take the time to complete the surveys, but schools are not always confident that students are answering honestly or taking the surveys seriously and students sometimes feel tired of completing surveys without having a sense that their feedback is making a difference.

CEA recently had an opportunity to hold focus groups with students who have completed the ***What did you do in school today? (WDYDIST)*** – Tell Them From Me (TTFM) survey for two or three years. At each meeting we asked students what they thought about the survey. As we listened to different groups’ responses we learned that students are most likely to see the survey as a meaningful opportunity to share their experiences of school and learning when they:

- Understand who is asking the questions.
- Understand the purpose of the survey.
- See survey results and changes being made that respond to them.
- Are invited to collaborate with staff in using survey data as a tool for improvement.

We have drawn on feedback from students and ideas shared by WDYDIST schools to create guiding questions and possible answers for introducing the survey to students. Each school will likely have different answers to each of the questions listed below and suggested points to share (whether staff or students are introducing the survey) with students provided only as a guide. Four ideas for bringing these messages to students are also described.

Q1. WHO'S ASKING THE QUESTIONS?

Some possible points to share:

- When you log in to complete a survey you go through The Learning Bar's survey website. The school is using this survey because we want to hear how students are feeling about our school and their experiences in classrooms.
- Even though you are doing the survey through an external site all of your answers are confidential and they are only being used by staff and students at our school and by the Canadian Education Association who combines survey results from our school with results from more than 100 schools across Canada as part of a larger project that is studying student engagement and how students feel about their learning.

Q2. WHY ARE YOU ASKING?

Some possible points to share with students:

- We have a lot of information about how well students are doing in school (e.g. marks, attendance) but don't know a lot about how you feel about our school or your experience of learning in classrooms.
- The survey was written to give you an opportunity to tell us about your own experiences.
- When we get the results back we can look at what all students told us as well as seeing what students in different grades said or see if male and female students have different experiences.
- We use this information at staff meetings to help us improve our school and to help us understand how we can engage students more in their learning.

Q3. WHY ASK US (STUDENTS)?

Some possible points to share with students:

In the past, schools often made decisions based on what they felt students wanted or needed. This survey is one way for us to get feedback directly from you based on your own experiences. The survey is one of the ways we can support students' having a voice in our school and classrooms and will help us to better understand your needs and opinions.



Q4. WHY ARE YOU ASKING SO MANY PERSONAL QUESTIONS?

Some possible points to share with students:

- There is a lot of evidence to show that students' family backgrounds have an influence on how they experience school. If we want all students to have positive experiences of learning, the questions about your family and your personal experiences (e.g. what languages you speak at home) allow us to understand the experiences of different groups of students and to make sure that all of our decisions about improvement work equally well for all students.
- You should always remember that you don't have to answer a question on the survey if you are uncomfortable with it and that you can talk to us more about the survey questions if you want more information.

Q5. WHY ARE WE DOING THE SURVEY EVERY YEAR?

We do the survey each year to help us in three ways:

1. Your answers help us to understand how we can improve our school and your learning.
2. At other times, if we try to do something differently what you tell us on the survey helps us understand if these changes are making a positive difference for students.
3. Because new students join the school in grade 7 or 10 and we want to make sure we are including new students and seeing if students' experiences change as they move on to the next grade.

Q6. DO WE HAVE TO ANSWER EVERY QUESTION?

Some possible points to share with students:

- No. If you are not comfortable with answering a question you can move on to the next one.
- If you don't understand a question, you can ask a teacher or another student to explain it.
- Always remember that your responses are confidential and combined with responses from other students at the school so no one will know which answers are yours.

Q7. WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THE RESULTS?

Note: each school will have a different answer to this question, but it's important to let students know that you value them taking the time to complete the survey. If students will have an opportunity to see the results and/or join in the process of interpreting them share this information before they complete the survey.

EXAMPLES FROM WDYDIST SCHOOLS

1. Provide an orientation to WDYDIST and the survey to a group of students and allow them to introduce the survey to students in homerooms or at a school assembly.
2. Provide teachers with a short script explaining the survey and present it in each classroom on or close to the day students will be completing the survey.
3. In smaller schools the WDYDIST School Coordinator or a school administrator might visit homerooms to introduce the survey.
4. Use electronic tools (school television or PA announcements, websites) to share your answers to questions 1 – 7 (above).

TIP: If you have data available from previous years, ask students to tell you which results they are most interested in seeing and share these with students in the weeks leading up the survey.

