

What the Research Says About Student Feedback for Teachers

THE MEASURES OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING PROJECT

The largest and most recent inquiry into the use of student feedback in assessing teacher practice is the [Measures of Effective Teaching \(MET\) Project](#).¹ The MET project was a research partnership funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that engaged 3,000 teacher volunteers and dozens of independent research teams. The project's goal was to build and test measures of effective teaching to find out how evaluation methods could best be used to tell teachers more about the skills that make them most effective and to help districts identify and develop great teaching.

Underlying the MET Project's approach is the belief that feedback about teacher performance should not rely exclusively on student test scores. Indeed, the findings of the MET Project confirm the importance of using multiple factors to provide teachers with valuable information about their performance. In addition to the use of classroom observations, professional knowledge tests, and value-added student achievement gains, the MET Project emphasizes the use of student perception surveys to provide balanced and reliable feedback to teachers about their performance in the classroom. After all, no one spends more time in a teacher's classroom than the students themselves, and ultimately, no one has a bigger stake in ensuring teachers' effectiveness.

The MET study had two significant findings around student perception surveys:

- When student surveys are combined with observation and student growth data, these three measures tell us more and are able to predict future effectiveness better than any of them alone.
- Student perception survey results are correlated to student achievement gains.

OTHER RESEARCH ON STUDENT FEEDBACK

On a broader scale, the use of student feedback more generally has been shown to impact both teachers and students positively. On the one hand, teachers can learn about patterns in their teaching that they may not have been aware of, and how those approaches impact student learning. On the other hand, students are given a forum in which they can be heard, and this emphasis on student voice promotes both reflection and responsibility on the part of the students.²

Research has also shown that strategies aimed at getting to the heart of how students *feel*—their sense of safety, belonging, connectedness and confidence—can transform school-wide culture, as well as reduce bullying and peer victimization. In other words, to transform school culture, you must create a community of care, evidenced by students with strong skills to persevere, resolve conflict, manage emotions, engage in pro-social activities, engage with peers, partner with adults and cope with disappointment, anxiety and other stressors involved in their lives.³

¹ Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2012). [Asking students about teaching: Student perception surveys and their implementation](#). (MET Project Policy and Practice Brief). Retrieved from http://www.metproject.org/downloads/Asking_Students_Practitioner_Brief.pdf

² Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2012). [Asking students about teaching: Student perception surveys and their implementation](#). (MET Project Policy and Practice Brief). Retrieved from http://www.metproject.org/downloads/Asking_Students_Practitioner_Brief.pdf

Wiggins, G. (2011). Giving students a voice: The power of feedback to improve teaching. *Education Horizons*, 89(3), 23-26.

³ For more information on school climate and culture see The Colorado Education Initiative's [Transforming School Climate Toolkit](#).

Student perception surveys offer a research-based, systematic way to capture evidence of culture on both classroom- and school-wide levels. Several non-cognitive factors captured on the student perception survey are:

- Students' motivation to learn and to attend school
- Their understanding of whether education is something they can do or even should do
- The relevance of what they see and hear to their life experience and future ambitions
- Their feelings about themselves as smart or capable
- The extent to which they feel people at school care about them, respect them and trust them
- Their experiences in school with student bullying and victimization
- Their sense of belonging to their school community or feeling of being marginalized, isolated, different, and unwelcome

Research demonstrates that these factors have a direct impact on increasing academic achievement, with a 2011 study showing that evidence-based instruction in social and emotional learning boosts academic achievement by, on average, eleven points on standardized tests.⁴ Social emotional learning, with its attention to safety, connection, and support; challenge and engagement; and a school culture in which most individuals can productively manage and control their emotions improves the conditions for learning that appear to be equally important to teaching and to child/youth development, especially for kids in poverty or who experience other factors that place them at risk.⁵

⁴ Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., and Schellinger, K.B. (2011) The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432.

⁵ Osher, D., Sidana, A., & Kelly, P. (2008) Improving conditions for learning for youth who are neglected or delinquent. Washington, D.C.: National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth who are Delinquent, Neglected, or at Risk.

Osher, D. et al (2007) A comprehensive approach to promoting social, emotional and academic growth in contemporary schools. *Best Practices in School Psychology*