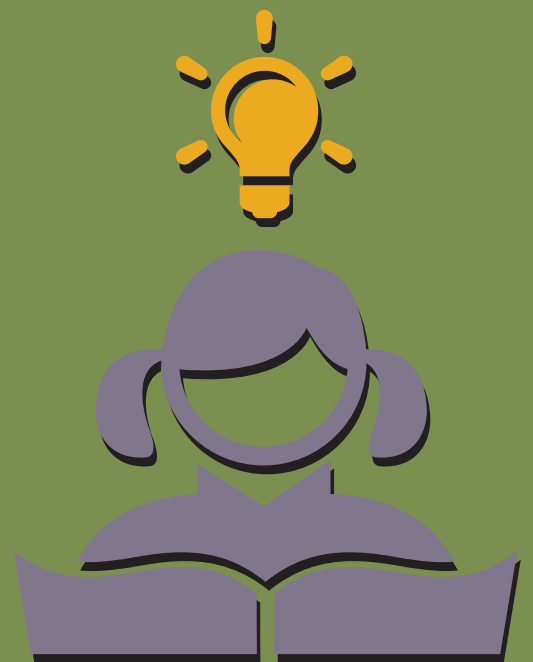## THE COLORADO EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Student Perception Survey
PLANNING GUIDE

Fall 2015

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Colorado's Student Perception Survey (SPS) is a 34-question instrument that asks students about their classroom experience. The questions measure elements of student experience that most closely correlate to the professional practices that are demonstrated to improve student outcomes. The survey maps to Colorado's Teacher Quality Standards; the results yield information about a teacher's performance in the first three standards relating to professional practice. The survey has the flexibility to be used as a formative tool or as a summative measure of teacher evaluation under Colorado's education effectiveness law.

Planning Timeline

The planning timeline will give you an overview of the planning, administration, and reporting process. The subsequent sections of the guide will elaborate and provide examples for each component of the process.

Case Studies

You will find case studies from our partner districts that have already used the survey. These are meant to be genuine examples of key decision points, struggles, and lessons learned.

Resources

Materials such as editable templates, checklists, protocols, and PowerPoint presentations will be referenced. You can find all of these resources at www.coloradoedinitiative.org/studentsurvey/.

Glossary

The glossary defines key terms.

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Contents

Overview of Colorado's Student Perception Survey

Historically, direct feedback from students about their experiences with teachers has seldom been collected for educators to use to improve their practice. However, research has shown that student perception data is in many cases more valuable than classroom observations and student growth on standardized tests. In fact, the combination of student perception, classroom observation, and student growth provides the most clear and comprehensive picture of teacher performance. Student surveys provide a unique form of actionable feedback that districts, schools, and teachers can use to inform practice.

What the Research Says

The largest and most recent inquiry into the use of student feedback in assessing teacher practice is the 2012 Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project[1], 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.

The MET project tested several measures that can be used to evaluate multiple aspects of a teacher's contribution to student learning. One of these measures was a student survey in which students responded to questions about teacher actions. The MET study had two significant findings about student 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 measure alone.
- SPS results are correlated to student achievement gains.

On a broader scale, using student feedback more generally has been shown to impact both teachers and students positively. Teachers can learn about patterns in their teaching that they may not have been aware of and how those approaches impact student learning. 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.[2,3]

Survey Development

The Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) created Colorado's SPS to be an effective and reliable tool that makes it safe for teachers to receive relevant and actionable feedback from their students. We engaged in a rigorous development and pilot process to create a survey that is specifically designed with input from Colorado teachers and students.[4]

Throughout the pilot process, we worked closely with 16 partner districts to identify best practices regarding survey administration, and we have incorporated those best practices in every step of this planning guide. Our 16 partner districts represented a range of diversity, including districts with:

- Diverse geographies, including large urban districts, rural districts, and mountain districts.
- Varying levels of technological access. For example, one of our partners provides a tablet for every student in the district, while several others only have one computer lab for all schools in the district to share.
- Highly variable support staff structures, including some that have designated tech, data, and communications staff, and others where the superintendent might also be a principal, data coordinator, or director of human resources.

The pilot period—and the hard work done by the 1,400 teachers who participated—was strategically designed to gather lessons learned, teacher feedback, and best practices to provide educators with the information they need to be able to trust and rely on their results.

For more information about the survey development process, please see the full technical report.

The Colorado Survey

Colorado's SPS is a 34-question instrument that asks students about their classroom experience. The questions measure elements of student experience that most closely correlate to professional practices that improve student outcomes. In addition, the survey maps to Colorado's Teacher Quality Standards; the results yield information about a teacher's performance in the first three standards relating to professional practice. The survey has the flexibility to be used as a formative tool or as a summative measure of teacher evaluation under Colorado's education effectiveness law.

[1] Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Asking Students about Teaching: Student Perception Surveys and Their Implementation. MET Project Policy and Practice Brief, 2012. Retrieved from http://www.metproject.org/downloads/Asking_Students_ Practitioner_Brief.pdf.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Wiggins, G. "Giving Students a Voice: The Power of Feedback to Improve Teaching." *Education Horizons*, 89(3), 23-26, 2011.

[4] A number of items on the Colorado SPS were adapted from items made available for noncommercial use through the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project.

Planning Timeline

CATEGORY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	TASK
Make Key Decisions		
Planning	Superintendent	○ Appoint a District Coordinator and Create a Planning Committee.
Planning	Planning committee	Make key decisions: ○ Use a vendor or manage administration internally? ○ Online or paper/pencil survey administration? ○ When will the survey be administered? ○ How will students and teachers be sampled? ○ Include an open-ended question on the survey? ○ How will the survey results be used?
Planning	Planning committee	○ Determine communication strategy for staff, students and community.
Planning	District coordinator	○ Start pulling needed student and teacher data for survey preparation.
2 Months Before Administration		
Planning	District coordinator	Start planning for survey administration with school leaders: ○ Appoint a building coordinator ○ Inform all stakeholders of the purpose and process for the survey. ○ Verify the accuracy of student and teacher data. ○ Schedule the date(s) for survey administration. ○ Map the process for sharing survey reports with teachers.
Survey materials	District coordinator	○ Customize building coordinator and proctor guides to reflect all decisions above.
Survey materials	District coordinator	○ Start compiling materials such as surveys, building coordinator and proctor guides.
1 Month Before Administration		
Communication	Building coordinators	○ Distribute protocols to all teaching staff and school administrators, even staff who are not serving as proctor. ○ Let building coordinators know when their materials will arrive.
Communication	District coordinator	○ Let building coordinators know when their materials will arrive.
2 Weeks Before Administration		
Survey materials	District coordinator	○ Deliver survey materials to schools.
Survey materials	Building coordinators	○ Review survey materials. ○ Communicate with staff about the distribution of materials. ○ Remind staff to review the proctor protocols before administration.
Day(s) of Administration		
Administration	Building coordinators	○ Deliver survey materials to proctors. ○ Be available to ensure smooth administration process.
Directly After Administration		
Administration	Building coordinators	○ Collect survey materials ○ Prepare survey materials for vendor or internal entry process.
1 Week After Administration		
Communication	Building & district coordinators	○ Debrief with staff on the survey administration process. ○ Review the timeline for reports and plans for engaging with results.
1-3 Months After Administration		
Communication	Building & district coordinators	○ Distribute reports and engage with staff on results.

District-Level Planning

Engaging Stakeholders

Appoint a District Coordinator

Have one point person at the district who can manage the survey process across all schools. This person should have access to all principals and schools in the district and a working knowledge of district data systems and processes. This person should also be a trusted colleague who can help build good will.

Create a Planning Committee

Building trust and investment in the survey process is a key first step in planning. We recommend forming a planning committee with representatives from all stakeholder groups in the district. If your district is overburdened with demands on employee time, taking this step may feel cumbersome at first. However, engaging all stakeholders in the planning process helps to ensure that they are invested from the very beginning.

Having a variety of people on the planning committee will build transparency and create strong communication throughout your district. The committee members can also ensure that the reasoning behind key decisions is shared with a broad audience of stakeholders. In addition to planning for survey administration, this committee should also be responsible for creating a communication strategy and vetting communication materials.

We recommend that districts include the following representatives in the planning committee:

- Chairperson: District survey coordinator.
- District and building administrators.
- Teachers, including representatives from the teachers union.
- District data staff member(s) (for example, a member of the IT and/or assessment/data office).

BEST PRACTICES

Engage stakeholders early and often.

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Empower your planning committee to make decisions, not just provide input.

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Make the process as transparent as possible.

CASE STUDY

Engaging the Teachers Association in Thompson School District

Patrick Mount, Strategic Data Fellow

The fact that the survey was being piloted for the first time and on such a broad scale led to significant communication challenges. We often felt that we were building the plane as we were flying it, and therefore were not always able to share accurate information in a timely manner. This reality added to an already complicated process, but also made clear the absolute necessity of ensuring that all stakeholders were consistently informed regarding the purpose, procedure, and expected products of these activities.

Perhaps the most significant stakeholders needing this consistent communication were the teachers themselves. Because Thompson was participating in the pilot year of the survey, we wanted to make sure that we were deliberately building buy-in among teachers throughout the process. At the very beginning of the student survey rollout, we realized that we needed a plan for engaging association representatives, as they are a powerful and valued voice in our district. Right away, we deployed survey project leaders to regularly scheduled meetings with the building-level association representatives to listen to concerns and respond with the most up-to-date information possible.

Together we created a plan to enhance communication and increase positive participation in the survey. It was ultimately two key decisions made by district and union leadership that helped everyone feel more comfortable with the process. First, we allowed teachers to opt in to participate in the survey during the pilot year. I was shocked by the high participation rates: 98 percent of our teachers participated in the fall administration, and 99 percent participated in the spring administration. Second, we decided that during the pilot, individual teacher results would only be shared with teachers, not building or district administrators. This cultivated a sense of safety in teachers who were receiving this kind of feedback from students for the very first time. I think that both of these decisions went a long way in building buy-in from all stakeholders. We have already begun to build a broad community of support as we contemplate using this in future years as part of our district feedback process.

Key Decisions

As you begin planning to use Colorado's SPS in your district, there are several key decision points to consider. Thinking through these issues at the beginning of the planning process will help ensure that your process and administration plan will best meet the goals and needs of your unique context and provide valuable, actionable feedback to your instructional staff.

Should the District Use a Vendor or Manage Administration Internally?

Depending on the budget and internal capacity of your district, you may elect to use an external vendor to manage survey administration, analyze results, and/or produce reports. Using a vendor may cost more initially, but it may ultimately result in a smoother survey process if your internal capacity is limited. However, if your district has the capacity to manage all aspects of planning, administration, and reporting, it may make more sense to handle everything internally. As you decide the best strategy for your district, we recommend that you read through this guide and consider all aspects of coordinating the administration logistics and reporting to decide if there is enough internal capacity to manage the survey process alone. If you plan to use a third-party vendor for survey administration, the vendor must enter into a licensing agreement with CEI. Please contact info@coloradoedinitiative.org to obtain a list of vendors with current SPS licensing agreements or to initiate the process for a vendor to execute a new licensing agreement.

Should the District Administer an Online or Paper/Pencil Survey?

Another important decision is how the surveys will be administered to students. Several factors should be considered when deciding whether to administer your surveys online or in paper/pencil format:

Online

- **Technology:** Technological capacity is an issue for many districts. If your district decides to use an online survey, make sure that there are enough computers for all participating students to complete the survey within the survey administration window. Test your Internet bandwidth to make sure that it is adequate for accessing the survey platform and that it is sufficient to accommodate a large number of students accessing the Web at the same time.
- **Scheduling:** All students do not need to complete the survey on the same day, but you should construct your survey schedule so that all students have access to a computer at some point during the administration window. See the scheduling section for examples of online administration schedules.
- **Data quality:** Administering the survey online provides two advantages for data quality. First, online survey tools can be programmed to automatically capture the amount of time students spend on the survey. This information can be useful in assuring teachers that students take the survey seriously. Second, online platforms allow for more complex programming to redirect students who should not be taking the survey (such as students assigned to respond about a teacher they have never had or students assigned to respond about a noninstructional course like study hall). In an online platform, the survey can be halted for those cases; furthermore, it captures this data, which may prove useful to districts as they consider the quality of their existing data system(s).
- **Timeline for Reports:** Online survey administration can usually ensure that reports are received sooner than with paper surveys. The exact timing of reports will depend on the vendor you choose (if you opt to use a vendor) or on your internal district capacity (if district staff will prepare reports).
- **Cost:** If employing a vendor, please note that costs vary for different online administration options. Overall, if you are using a vendor, costs will generally be less for online administration vs. paper/pencil.

Paper/Pencil

- **Data entry:** Data entry can be cumbersome for districts that administer paper/pencil surveys, especially for districts that manage the survey process internally. Even if your district has a Scantron system, you will need a staff member to spend time entering survey responses into the system.
- **Scheduling:** Paper/pencil surveys do not require technology for administration, and surveys could be administered on the same day and/or period for an entire school or district.
- **Timeline for Reports:** Due to the time associated with data entry as explained above, the exact timing of reports will depend on the vendor you choose or your internal district capacity.
- **Cost:** Should you choose to go with a vendor, costs vary for paper/pencil surveys. Be sure to investigate all options thoroughly.

When will the Survey be Administered?

- SPS results can be a powerful tool to inform practice. For this reason, we recommend administering the survey early enough in the school year to give teachers time to reflect on their results and use them to inform practice during the current school year.
- Research suggests that students can accurately complete student surveys as early as six weeks after the beginning of the school year. Given that some teachers only see students one or two times each week, we recommend an administration window between October and December.
- Districts can administer the survey once a year or more than once so that educators can see change over time.
- When planning an administration window, please remember to consider the following:
  - Other testing windows (district benchmarks, course finals, TCAP, etc.).
  - School holidays and breaks.
  - The timeline for results (for example, if you want teachers to have results for midyear reviews or other goal-setting conversations).

Which Teachers and Students will Participate in the Survey?

Your district coordinator should work with your planning committee to decide which teachers will participate in survey administration and which students will take surveys about them (referred to as "sampling"). When thinking about sampling, there is a tension between a desire to survey a large group of students for each teacher and the equally important desire to limit the number of surveys completed by each individual student. In making decisions about sampling, districts should consider which teachers are sampled and which students are asked to respond about their respective teachers.

Which teachers will participate?

- Consider whether to have all teachers (core teachers and specialists) participate in the survey administration.
  - **Sample size:** Consider sample size when making this decision. We recommend a sample size of at least 10 students for each teacher to protect student anonymity. This does not mean that specialists with less than 10 students cannot participate, but it may be necessary to decide that teachers with less than 10 students will receive only multiyear data reports displaying pooled data from 10 total student responses across multiple years. For example, a teacher who has four student responses in the 2013-2014 school year and six student responses in the 2014-2015 school year would not receive a report at all in the 2013-2014 school year. Instead, she would receive a report in the 2014-2015 school year showing combined data from two years.
  - **Scheduling:** If your district decides that students in grades 3-5 will complete more than one survey (that is, their homeroom teacher and a specialist), students will need two separate 30-minute sittings to complete the surveys. In grades 6-12, students can complete two surveys in one 45-minute sitting.

How will students be sampled?

- At the elementary level, all students typically complete surveys about their homeroom teachers. As mentioned above, your district can decide if students will also complete surveys about specialists, resource teachers, etc.
- If students are completing surveys for specialists or other teachers in addition to their homeroom teacher, we recommend a similar random sampling criteria for these additional teachers (for example, an art teacher would have a random sample of all of the students who complete a survey for her).
- At the secondary level, where each student likely has multiple teachers, districts should consider having a representative sample of students complete surveys for each teacher rather than having all students complete surveys for all of their teachers. Having a student complete a survey for each of his or her teachers can feel unreasonable for the student and lead to inaccurate survey results if students are overburdened with too many surveys.

  We recommend a random sampling criteria across all courses. Although it is likely easier to pick students using the periods within a teacher's schedule (for example, all students complete the survey on their 2nd and 6th period teachers), our research suggests that it is better to randomly select students across all periods taught by a teacher. Contact CEI for a sampling syntax file that you can use for random sampling in your district.

- Students with disabilities, in general, should complete the survey using proper accommodations as necessary based upon each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Decisions to exclude students with disabilities from the survey should be made on a case-by-case basis when the nature and severity of a student's disability are such that the student likely would not be able to meaningfully complete the survey.

Include an Open-Ended Question on the Survey?

During the pilot, students were asked an open-ended question at the end of the survey: *"Do you have any other thoughts or feedback for your teacher?"* The majority of student responses to this question were actionable, demonstrating that students take the survey seriously and provide substantive feedback about their instructional experiences.

While including this open-ended question can yield rich, actionable feedback for teachers, it also entails an added layer of analysis and reporting. All open-ended responses need to be read before sharing them with teachers to protect student confidentiality (for example, student signing his or her name in the lower grades).

For more information about the open-ended question and factors to consider in your decision whether to include it, see the results and reflection section of this guide.

BEST PRACTICES

Take special care to build buy-in if this is the first time your district is using a student survey.

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Engage your teachers in the discussion about the use of results.

How will Results be Used?

We cannot underscore this point enough: It is critical to the success of your survey administration that there is a thoughtful consideration of this question, and that teachers and school leaders are engaged in district decision-making. It is also important to communicate these decisions with teachers early and often so that they understand the ways the data will (and will not) be used to inform practice, make decisions, and evaluate educators.

If this is the first year that your district is using the SPS, you can make these decisions after you have piloted the survey in your district. Many districts use the first year of survey administration to introduce educators to the concept of student surveys, build buy-in, and work collectively to decide how results should be used moving forward. If you choose not to formally use survey results during your first year, make sure that all staff members are aware of that decision and the process and timeline for deciding how results will be used in the future.
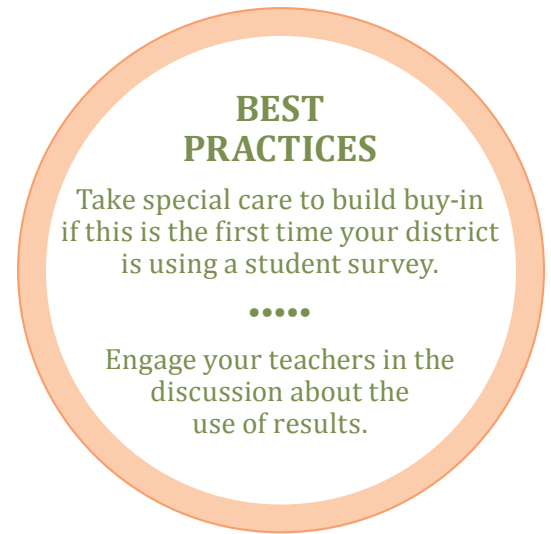
There are many ways that results can be used to inform teacher, school, and district goals. Some options include:

As a formative tool:
- Teachers can use results as a formative tool to reflect on their practice, complete their self-reflection, and create goals.
- Principals can use results to pair teachers who need growth in an area with teachers who have demonstrated strength in that same area.
- Schools and districts can use results to identify trends and create strategies to address them.

As part of teacher evaluation:
- Survey results at the item level could be used as an artifact for determining ratings for professional practices (Teacher Quality Standards I-III).
- Survey results could also be considered as one of your multiple measures.
- Teachers could be evaluated on the plan that they create around their results but not necessarily the results themselves (Teacher Quality Standard IV only).

This is not a mutually exclusive choice; results could be used formatively by teachers to inform their practice during the year and also be included as a part of their formal evaluation.

See the results and reflection section of this guide for more information about preparing reports and using results.

Communication Strategy

Developing a communication strategy that engages and informs all stakeholders early and often is possibly the most important component of preparing for survey administration. Transparency and communication can result in better buy-in during administration and ultimately an increased confidence in the accuracy and usefulness of results.

Guiding Principles

- By itself, a reliable and valid instrument does not ensure that teachers will receive good feedback. If teachers do not trust the process, they will not use the data, so implementation fidelity and transparency are very important.
- Messaging matters!
    - Engage stakeholders early and often.
    - Make the process as transparent as possible.
- Give stakeholders real decision-making power.
- Teachers care about their practice and especially about their students. They also may experience nervousness and anxiety about the surveys, and district and school leaders must acknowledge those fears.

Building Educator Investment

- Colorado's SPS was built by teachers for teachers and is intended to provide educators with unique, actionable feedback about their practice.
- Before survey administration, all instructional staff should be briefed on the survey, its purpose, administration plans and timeline, and how results will be used.
- In districts where student surveys are being used for the first time, extra care should be taken to build buy-in and provide a transparent process for teachers.

Resources

- Webinar for Teachers on Colorado's Student Perception Survey
- Teacher FAQ
- Introductory PowerPoint presentation
- Overview of research behind student surveys
- Overview of students giving feedback on instruction
- Sample email to inform teachers of the process
- A guide for teachers on using survey results
- The full survey instruments for grades 3-5 and 6-12

Informing Other Key Stakeholders

Parents, school board members, and other community members should also be informed about the student survey purpose and process. Districts can use the following resources to communicate with these stakeholders:

- Prepared drop-in articles can be incorporated in existing district and school communications or newsletters.
- A sample parent letter in English or Spanish can be sent home prior to administration.
- Our overview of Colorado's SPS can be shared with board members and other community stakeholders.

CASE STUDY

Communicating with Teachers in Archuleta School District

Linda Reed, Assistant Superintendent

In the Archuleta School District, communication with teachers was a priority from the beginning. District administrators prioritized transparency, and they felt it was important for the entire process to be as open and candid as possible. Principals were informed about the purpose and process of survey administration early to build their buy-in and ensure consistent communication with staff.

Superintendent Mark DeVoti visited each school before survey administration. He talked personally with teachers about the survey, and his message was clear: Student perception surveys are all about feedback and are unique tools that can help everyone in the district improve. Superintendent DeVoti made sure that staff had access to information about the survey and created an environment where principals and teachers felt comfortable asking questions about the process.

Transparency continued throughout the survey administration process with strategic emails before each administration and clear communication about when survey results would be shared, who would see teacher-level reports, and how data would be used in the district.

Data Collection Before Survey Administration

Data quality is extremely important in ensuring a smooth administration process and building confidence in the accuracy of results. A full data quality checklist and sample data file are available on CEI's website.

District Point Person for Data Collection

Accurate and consistent data across the district is important. Sometimes the data you need may exist in different systems at the district and school level, which can complicate data collection efforts. If this is true in your district, build in time to combine data from various sources. It is helpful to have one person collect the data needed for survey administration and aggregate it so that it is consistent across all schools within the district.

Relevant Data

Certain data elements are imperative for accurate administration and reporting, including:

- Teacher ID numbers
- Student ID numbers
- Teacher, student, and course names
- Grade level and period (secondary only) information for every student

Your district may also choose to include additional data so that results can be disaggregated by specific subgroups, such as:

- Relevant student demographics, including race/ethnicity, gender, FRL eligibility, and disability status
- Expected course grade
- Other student achievement data
- Attendance data

BEST PRACTICES

Designate one person to be in charge of data collection and verification.

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Be clear about the data needed.

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Verify data several times throughout the planning process.

All data *not* relevant to the survey administration should be removed, for example:

- School staff who should not be assessed (such as administrative staff, librarians, counselors, homeroom teachers, advisory and career path teachers)
- Student teachers
- Records for other semesters, trimesters, or quarters
- Teachers who opt out of the survey if that option is made available to them in your district

Data Verification

After the survey administration data has been collected and aggregated at the district level, building administrators should review the data before it is used to assign surveys. Below is a sample data verification process from Pittsburgh Public Schools:[5]

Before survey administration	During survey administration	After survey administration
• After determining which periods to survey in each school, the central office creates lists showing what each teacher teaches during those periods and which students are in those classes. • Principals check and correct these lists before survey forms are printed for each class to be surveyed.	• Teachers review and correct roster lists they receive with the survey forms for their classes. • Teachers are given extra survey forms with unique identifiers to assign to students missing from rosters provided.	• Completed surveys go to Cambridge Education—distributors of Tripod—which manages survey procedures and works with district administrators to assure data quality before it is released to teachers.

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[5] Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. *Asking Students about Teaching: Student Perception Surveys and Their Implementation*. MET Project Policy and Practice Brief, 2012. Retrieved from http://www.metproject.org/downloads/Asking_Students_Practitioner_Brief.pdf.

Customizing Survey Materials

Survey Protocols and Instructions

You will need to create (or work with your vendor to create) protocols for building coordinators and survey proctors that reflect all of the key decisions:

- Online or paper surveys
- Sampling and participation of students and teachers
- Materials that proctors will receive
- How materials will be delivered to schools and then to proctors
- How materials should be collected or disposed of after administration
  Survey materials need to be collected or disposed of in a manner that preserves student confidentiality.

Districts can utilize the following templates on CEI's website as a starting point for protocols:

- Proctor guides
  - Primary proctor guide—paper/pencil
  - Primary proctor guide—online
  - Secondary proctor guide—paper/pencil
  - Secondary proctor guide—online
- Building coordinator guides
  - Building coordinator guide—paper/pencil
  - Building coordinator guide—online

Survey Administration Materials

You will need to compile (or work with your vendor to compile) survey administration materials for each school and each proctor.

Every school should receive the following:

- A building coordinator guide
- A master list of all students in the school with their survey assignments

Every proctor should receive the following:

- A proctor guide.
- A master list of the students in the proctor's group. This list can also be used to indicate any students who do not participate or are absent and need to take the survey at a later time.
- Student materials: either paper surveys or information to login to the online survey platform. Student materials should ensure that confidentiality is protected and that students complete the surveys as assigned. Some options for ensuring that teacher assignments are kept confidential include having assignments covered in an envelope or with a sticker, using barcodes to label surveys, etc.

Informing Stakeholders

Appoint a Building Coordinator

Each school should have a building coordinator—a point person who can manage all aspects of survey administration in the building. The building coordinator should be the principal or another administrator because this person will have access to confidential information about student-teacher survey pairings.

Inform and Engage Teachers

Before administering the survey, all instructional staff should be briefed on the survey instrument, its purpose, administration plans and timelines, and how results will be used.

- Districts can use the introductory PowerPoint presentation template to present the survey information to relevant stakeholders. This presentation also includes a recommended activity to encourage teachers and staff to begin familiarizing themselves with the survey.
- All instructional staff should receive the survey questions and proctor guides even if they are not proctoring the survey.
- Building coordinators can use the sample email to communicate with instructional staff about the process.

Build Student Understanding and Comfort

- For many students, this may be the first time they have been asked to provide this kind of feedback about their teachers. It is important to inform students of the survey administration in advance and to talk explicitly with them about the process and purpose.
- Districts can share CEI's student information sheet (in English and Spanish) with students before the survey administration.
- It may also be helpful to teach a mini-lesson on what a survey is, why opinions matter, and why feedback is important.
- It is equally important to debrief with students after they have completed the survey so that they can share their experience with the survey and understand that their feedback was valuable. Internal and external research has shown that student confidentiality is essential for students to feel comfortable and respond honestly to survey items.
- The MET study found that "[if] students believe their responses will negatively influence how their teachers treat them, feel about them, or grade them, then they'll respond so as to avoid that happening."[6]
- In interviews that we conducted with students regarding Colorado's SPS, students indicated that they would feel more comfortable responding honestly if the teacher they were assessing were not in the room.
- Administrators and teachers should communicate with students, in words and actions, that their responses are confidential. For example, proctors should not be walking around the room while students are taking the survey unless someone has a question.

Inform Parents

Parents should also be informed about the purpose and process of survey administration. Districts can use the sample parent letter in English and Spanish and drop-in articles to inform parents.

> ### BEST PRACTICES
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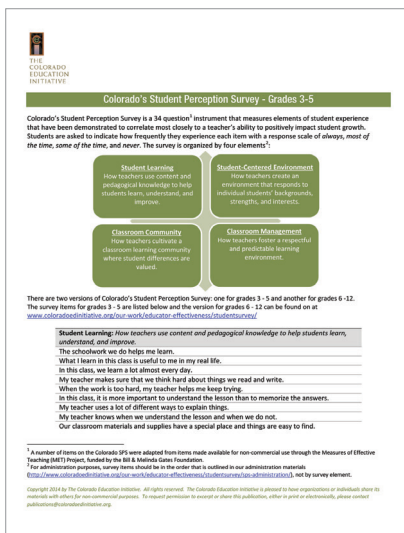> Create a clear plan for students who need accommodations.
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> Ensure that all instructional staff members are aware of the testing schedule and conditions, even if they are not proctoring the survey.
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> Work with staff to create a schedule that works for your school.
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> Make sure that students know that their privacy will be protected.

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[6] Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Asking Students about Teaching: Student Perception Surveys and Their Implementation. MET Project Policy and Practice Brief, 2012. Retrieved from http://www.metproject.org/downloads/Asking_Students_Practitioner_Brief.pdf.

Planning for Administration

Testing Conditions

Although the SPS is not a high-stakes assessment, the conditions under which the survey is administered are very important. Ensuring that students take the surveys under appropriate conditions will help ensure that their feedback is reliable and useful.

Building coordinators should ensure that all instructional staff reviews the proctor guides, even teachers who are not proctoring any surveys. This not only ensures that all staff members are aware of appropriate testing conditions but also builds confidence in survey results for teachers who are having surveys completed about them but are not proctoring surveys.

Districts and schools should take steps to ensure that students know their confidentiality is being maintained:

- **In any class that is completing a survey about a single teacher,** that teacher should not proctor the survey (e.g., elementary homeroom teachers)
    - □ This is not meant to isolate the teacher or create an atmosphere of secrecy, but instead to ensure that students feel comfortable answering honestly.
    - □ This does not mean that the survey administration has to feel overly prescriptive or formal; for example, teachers could swap classes with colleagues or work with instructional assistants or other staff members to proctor the survey at a convenient time.
- **In classes where random sampling is being used,** teachers may proctor a class where some of the students are completing a survey about them
    - □ Students should receive survey materials in a way that protects their confidentiality.
    - □ Some options for ensuring that teacher assignments covered in an envelope or with a sticker, using bar codes to label surveys, etc.
- **In all classes**, the words and actions of teachers and administrators should also communicate to students that their answers are private and that they should feel comfortable answering honestly.

Proctors should feel comfortable providing any accommodations that students need to access the survey.

- Proctors should use the IEPs of students with disabilities to identify any accommodations those students might need. Decisions to exclude students from the survey should be made on a case-by-case basis when the nature and severity of a student's disability are such that the student likely would not be able to meaningfully complete the survey. Alternate arrangements should be made for these students in advance of administration day.

- Because the survey does not test students' academic knowledge, proctors can read the entire survey out loud to any group of students. In fact, for elementary students we strongly recommend that the entire survey is read aloud.
- Proctors can also help students with any questions that are not about the teacher being reviewed.

The testing area will depend on the type of administration, size of school, and proctor group.

- Classroom administration works best for larger schools.
- Common area administration, such as in the school library or cafeteria, can work well for very small schools, but complications did arise when schools with over 200 students elected to administer the survey this way (the logistics of getting all students in one place in a timely manner, distracting environments, etc.).
- In schools and districts using online survey administration the testing area will need computers with Internet access.
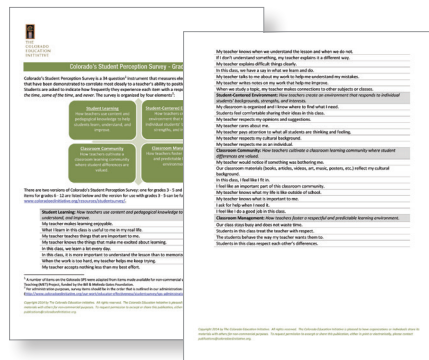
Scheduling

Typically, each district should select a survey administration window and then allow schools to choose administration dates within that window. The length of the administration window will vary depending on the size of the district; a small district may be able to complete all surveys in a week, whereas a large district may need several weeks.

If using online surveys, schools will likely need to create a schedule for computer access. Some suggestions include:

- Have administrators, librarians, computer teachers, instructional assistants, and other staff members proctor all surveys over a few days in the computer lab.
- Have all students take the survey during one period but over the course of a week or several weeks. For example, administer the survey during 4th period and send two or three classes to the computer lab each day during that period. If you use this approach at the secondary level, make sure that any students with an off-block or unassigned period are assigned to take the survey in some location.
- Choose a class that all students take (such as language arts or homeroom) and have all surveys proctored during that class over the course of a week or several weeks.

In grades 3-5, create a schedule that ensures student confidentiality during administration. Teachers can swap classes with colleagues or work with another staff member to proctor.

The schedule must include provisions for any students who need accommodations, including students who may need the entire survey read aloud in Spanish.

During Administration

Ensure That Proctors are Prepared
- Have a plan for delivering materials to proctors and communicate this ahead of time.
- As materials are delivered, remind proctors:
  - About the administration plan: who, when, and where they are proctoring
  - About the plan for collecting survey materials after administration
  - To read the protocols before they administer the survey
  - To review the list of any students who need accommodations
- Be available throughout survey administration in case any issues arise.

After Administration

Directly After Administration
- Collect and/or dispose of survey materials.
- If your school is using paper surveys, all surveys should be collected afterward.
- If your school is using online surveys, student information sheets should be disposed of in a way that protects student confidentiality (for example, collected by the survey coordinator and disposed of in the central office or shredded at the school).
- Complete make-up surveys as needed.

1-2 Weeks After Administration
- Debrief with students about the survey administration process.
- Debrief with staff about the survey administration process.
- Review the timeline for distribution of results.

Results and Reflection

How to Prepare Reports and Analysis

When preparing results and conducting analyses related to the SPS, consider how to:

- Aggregate data to the teacher level
- Ensure data quality (for example, cleaning and preparing data for analysis)
- Organize reports so teachers and administrators can understand and apply the results
- Debrief with staff about the survey administration process.
- Review the timeline for distribution of results.

Aggregating Data

CEI recommends presenting teacher-level results by:

- Mean score: Calculate results by item, element, and overall.
- Percent of responses in the top two categories, referred to as "percent favorable": Calculate results by item, element, and overall.

BEST PRACTICES

Decisions about how data will be used should guide report development and data analysis.

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Teachers should be consulted and included in decisions about report organization.

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Data should be thoroughly cleaned and reviewed to ensure student and teacher confidentiality; accurate assignment of students to teachers; and accurate, actionable results.

The decision to use either method is defensible and should be made based on the needs of your teachers.

In focus groups, teachers in the pilot expressed a strong preference for the percent favorable method for its simplicity and ease of interpretability. For example, they said it is easier to understand the concept that 78 percent of students responded favorably to a given item than to interpret a mean score of 3.2.

In general, the two measures produce nearly identical substantive results. When teachers are assigned a percentile rank based on each method, the results are almost perfectly correlated ($r = 0.988$).

- Mean scores produce a slightly more normal distribution, while the percent favorable approach is slightly poitively skewed. (See the full technical report for more information.)
- The percent favorable calculations are more highly correlated (than mean scores) to teacher performance ratings on professional practice with respect to Colorado's Teacher Quality Standards.

Ensuring Data Quality

Pre-Questions on the Survey Instrument

The full survey instrument for grades 3-5 and 6-12 includes several questions designed to ensure accurate assignment of students to teachers:

- Students are asked to enter their grade, school name, and teacher name(s).
  - Analysts should compare this data to the original district data to ensure it matches. In instances where the student-entered data does not match the assigned data, those responses should be invalidated.
- Students are also asked to verify that they have the assigned teacher and that the course is an instructional course (that is, not homeroom, office aide, etc.).
  - Analysts should remove data where students indicate that they do not have the assigned teacher or that the course is not an instructional course.
  - Online administration platforms can be programmed to automatically redirect students out of the survey if they indicate that they do not have the assigned teacher or that the course is not an instructional course.

Duplicate Responses

Analysts should also remove duplicate codes or student responses. In the pilot administration, these most often occurred when students had been kicked out of the survey due to Web connectivity issues. In these instances, CEI recommends including only completed surveys in analysis and removing any incomplete responses.

Protecting Confidentiality

To ensure data quality and protect student confidentiality, teachers with fewer than 10 responses should not be given teacher-level results. This does not mean that specialists with fewer than 10 students cannot participate, but it may be necessary to decide that teachers with fewer than 10 students will receive only multiyear data reports displaying pooled data from 10 total student responses across multiple years.

Analysts should also ensure that there is a sufficient sample and response rate at the school and district levels to justify including school and district results.

District personnel and analysts should always consider potential unintentional violations of confidentiality when reporting on the SPS data. For example, in a small district, providing comparison data for other schools could potentially yield information about the scores and trends in a specific building. The same concern holds for teachers in similar grades and/or content areas.

Including the Open-Ended Question

Your district may include the following open-ended question at the end of the survey: *"Do you have any other thoughts or feedback for your teacher?"* If your district includes this question, it is critical that this data be used carefully. Because it provides such rich, actionable feedback to teachers, we recommend sharing open-ended responses directly with teachers. However, this involves a significant time commitment and several safeguards to protect student confidentiality:

- All open-ended comments must be read and reviewed before sharing with teachers. Potential threats to confidentiality (for example, a student in the lower grades signing his or her name) should be edited or deleted.
- Note: Per statute, confidentiality provisions do not apply if schools or districts have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child has been abused or neglected. If open-ended responses indicate that a specific student is experiencing abuse, administrators are obligated to act on that information.

Organizing Reports

Report organization should align with the way you want to use the results. For example, if you want to include an aggregate score as one measure in a teacher's final evaluation, your reporting should include some aggregate measure. At a minimum, teachers should always be provided with the same information that is shared with their district, principal, or evaluator.

Report Structure

Colorado's SPS is organized into four elements that align to the Teacher Quality Standards:

- Student Learning: How teachers use content and pedagogical knowledge to help students learn, understand, and improve
- Student-Centered Environment: How teachers create an environment that responds to individual students' backgrounds, strengths, and interests
- Classroom Community: How teachers cultivate a classroom learning community where student differences are valued
- Classroom Management: How teachers foster a respectful and predictable learning environment

Reports can be organized by these four elements, by individual question, or as an aggregate score of all questions.

Engaging Meaningfully with Results

Regardless of report structure, it is critical that teachers can meaningfully engage with their results. Whenever possible, CEI recommends providing comparison data (that is, to other teachers in the same school and/or district, and to other teachers in their content area). Contact CEI for norming data from the pilot to assist in providing these comparisons.

Planning for the Distribution of Survey Results

Although results will be a powerful tool for understanding student experiences, it is natural for teachers to feel some anxiety or skepticism when reviewing the data for the first time. To ensure that teachers are best able to use the results to inform their practice, plan for the distribution of survey results during the initial planning stages.

Timing

- If possible, release results on a day and time when teachers will have uninterrupted time to review and reflect. This could be at the end of the school day or on a nonstudent contact day.
- Consider a gradual release of data that begins with giving teachers school and/or district level results. This approach will allow teachers to engage with the data in a nonthreatening way and to think about the implications of that data with their colleagues. See the case study on this page for an example of a staggered roll-out of results.

Communication

Districts should share the timeline for report release with teachers as soon as possible, perhaps during a staff meeting or via a simple email to all staff. Districts can use CEI's sample email for teachers when releasing results.

If you plan to share teacher-level results with evaluators, coaches, or principals, make sure those groups are aware of the timeline to allow them to prepare supports for their staff and teachers.

Sharing Results

We urge you to work with your teachers and association representatives to determine how teacher-level data will be shared. Some districts may choose to share teacher-level data with school and district administrators while others may choose to have teachers see their individual results but only provide aggregate data to school and district administrators. At a minimum, teachers should always be provided with the same information that is shared with their district, principal, or evaluator.

This decision should also align with how you choose to use results. For example, if you want principals to pair teachers with complementary strengths and areas for growth, then they will need to see teacher-level results.

As is profiled in the Engaging the Teachers Association in Thompson School District case study, some of our partner districts found that keeping teacher-level data confidential in the first year of implementation helped build trust and teacher buy-in.

CASE STUDY

Thoughtful Report Rollout in Centennial School District

Curtis Garcia, Principal

Centennial School District is a close-knit community that comprises three schools: an elementary, middle, and high school. From the beginning, our goal was to be considerate of teachers and thoughtful about what we wanted them to draw from the reports. We decided to release our school- and district-level results in advance of teacher-level results. This way, we could all have a shared experience and ground ourselves in the results of the district, and teachers could have exposure to the types of information they would be receiving in a nonthreatening manner.

We know that when you have your individual results in front of you, it is difficult to step back and think about the big picture. So we built that big picture context upfront. We sent the school and district results to all teachers in an email with information about when we would engage with them as a group and when they would get their individual results. We gave teachers a week to process school- and district-level results on their own, and then we came together on an in-service day to discuss our SPS outcomes as a district staff. We spent the morning looking at the district data and engaged in a few activities intended to facilitate thinking about how to process results. We talked about the three strongest survey items for the district and identified what professional practices they related to. We then completed this activity with our three strongest areas of need. We repeated these activities with the school-level results. This approach allowed us to get real-time feedback on where we are as a district and as individual schools, and we were able to celebrate our strengths and build staff investment in planning for improvement.

After sharing school- and district-level results and engaging with them together, we released the individual reports to each teacher and gave them time to process their results on their own or in groups of their choosing. This format gave teachers the opportunity to work with the data and understand the reports before engaging with their own results. Overall, I thought this was a really effective way of grounding their thinking so that they could look at their results and think about whether their strengths and weaknesses were personal or systematic.

Using the Results

Districts and schools should have plans in place for professional development around survey results. Some suggestions include:

- Group discussions about school- or district-level trends
- Department-level discussions about specific trends
- One-on-one conversations with peers, coaches, or administrators
- Office hours with coaches or administrators
- Strategic pairing with peers to match strengths and weaknesses

Districts can use the following resources on CEI's website to assist with the use of results:

- Digging Deeper: Using the Student Perception Survey with the Colorado State Model Evaluation System for Teachers
- Digging Deeper: Linking the Student Perception Survey Results with Your Local Evaluation System
- Sample guidance for using survey results for teachers, principals, and district staff
- Guidance for districts on using results for Unified Improvement Planning
- Guide for using Student Perception Survey Results to Set Goals

CASE STUDY *Teacher Reflections on Student Perception Survey Results from Partner Districts*

Using School-Level Results to Put My Own Practice in Context

School-level Student Perception Survey results helped me put my own practice into perspective in relation to the other teachers in my school. Teachers are often isolated and don't get to experience what other teachers are doing. Even though student survey results don't replace actual interaction and observation in colleagues' classrooms, it is an opportunity to get a big-picture view of what is going on in terms of school culture.

There were some areas of the survey where I scored higher than my school average, and it made me wonder what I was doing to cause students to perceive my classroom differently than the school as a whole. Likewise, other teachers may be doing something amazing to engage students in a certain way, and I might never know that until I see that my building overall is scoring higher on something that I am struggling in.

Using School-Level Results to Set Goals for Our Building

I hope that we can use the results to facilitate some meaningful partnering and feedback from peers. Teachers could use their results to identify areas that need improvement and work with their principal to pair them with another teacher who is doing really well in that area. It would be great to learn from peers that are excelling in areas that may be hard for others.

I also help design professional development for my school, and it was really great to see our school-wide trends so that we can make sure to focus building-wide goals in those areas. There were areas where we scored low as a school that were directly related to initiatives that we had implemented throughout the past year. For instance, our school scored low on the statement "All of the kids in my class know what they are supposed to be doing and learning." This was concerning to me because one of the things we had been focusing on as a staff was having learning objectives posted clearly in every classroom. Our low score on this question made me wonder whether teachers are actually posting learning objectives or not, or if they are but it is not being used as an effective tool the way it was intended. It is a really great way to get a big-picture view of what is going on and open up conversations with the staff about how we can grow and improve together.

Glossary

Administration Window	The window of time that district survey administration will take place. The recommended window for administration is October to December.
Building Coordinator	The person in charge of administration logistics at the building level.
Colorado Teacher Quality Standards	The six standards adopted by the State Board of Education pursuant to Senate Bill 10-191, the educator evaluation law. The first five standards reflect professional practices of educators, and the sixth standard reflects student growth.
Colorado's Student Perception Survey	A 34-item survey that asks students about their classroom experience.
District Coordinator	The person in charge of administration planning and execution at the district level.
Pilot Process	The process to develop and test the surveys before introducing them more widely. Colorado's surveys were piloted over three administration periods in 16 districts across Colorado.
Professional Practices	The most detailed level of the Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Teachers, professional practices describe the elements of each standard. They represent both teacher and student behaviors.
Sampling	The selection of a subset of students from within a teacher's overall class population to complete surveys about that teacher.
State Model Evaluation System	The comprehensive educator evaluation system developed by the Colorado Department of Education for full implementation of Senate Bill 10-191, the educator evaluation law.
Survey Element	One of four categories of Colorado's Student Perception Survey. These categories are Student Learning, Student-Centered Environment, Classroom Community, and Classroom Management.
Survey Instrument	The actual survey questions.
Survey Item	One of the 34 statements in Colorado's Student Perception Survey to which students respond. Example: "Our class stays busy and does not waste time."

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