Students as Change Agents:   
Using Student Perception Survey and School Climate Data

**FACILITATION GUIDE**

Schools and districts throughout the country are beginning to use student perception surveys (SPSs) to gather data about how students are experiencing their schools, classrooms, and teachers. Dolores School District in Dolores, Colo., has used these data with students to explore their school culture and create student-driven plans to improve it. This guide is a resource for other school districts interested in facilitating a similar process. All of the materials used by the Dolores School District are provided, including meeting agendas and student worksheets.

**Process Overview**

Dolores School District students met twice to review Colorado’s SPS data and create action plans based on the results. The first workshop occurred in the fall and focused on results from the previous school year. Students familiarized themselves with the survey, prioritized survey items for their school, looked at results, and created action plans based on areas of concern. The second workshop occurred in the spring, after the survey had been administered a second time. In this workshop students made predictions about the results, compared prior year results to current results, and then created action plans around areas of concern.

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**FALL MEETING AGENDA**

1. Conduct an icebreaker or team-building activity.
2. Establish the group norm setting.
3. Get to know the Student Perception Survey.

* Create student definitions of survey categories.
  + Break students into groups according to the following survey categories:
    - Student learning
    - Student-centered environment
    - Classroom community
    - Classroom management
  + Hand out survey questions and ask students to review questions in their category.
  + Create student definitions for each category and examples of specific items that align with that definition (e.g., Student learning: Ways that my teacher helps me learn and understand things in class).
  + Share definitions and specific item examples.
* Identify items that are most relevant to the school climate and predict scores.
  + Write each survey item on a separate piece of poster paper and create a T chart under each item for predictions and actuals. Hang the posters throughout the room. (If this takes up too much space, review each category separately.)
  + Ask students to work through each of the three sections below, placing a different colored sticky note with the question they have identified on the prediction side of the T chart:
    - Three most important questions for a school community where all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported. Place a [insert color] sticky note on the T chart for these items.
    - Three questions that received the highest scores at the school. Place a [insert color] sticky note on the T chart for these items.
    - Three questions that received the lowest scores at the school. Place a [insert color] sticky note on the T chart for these items.

1. Review last year’s survey results.

* Hand out results and ask students to review them in groups.
* Use the same colored sticky notes as above for highest and lowest scores. Ask students to place these notes on the actual side of the T chart.
  + Ask students to identify the questions that the school did really well on. Tell them to consider the following:
    - The items with the highest scores
    - The items with the biggest difference between their school and the state
  + Ask students to identify the questions that the school needs to work on. Tell them to consider the following:
    - The items with the lowest scores
    - The items with the biggest difference between the school and the state
    - The items that received a fine score but could still be improved
  + Use dot stickers to color-code student predictions for the first questions.
    - Of the questions that students thought were most important, how did the school do?
      * Red — worse than expected
      * Yellow — as expected
      * Green — better than expected

1. Facilitate a conversation. Ask students to identify their top three concerns and explain why they are concerns.
2. Develop action plans.

* Break students into three groups, one for each concern. Assign the following roles in each group:
  + Facilitator
  + Recorder
  + Reporter
* Create action plans.
  + Assign an adult to each group to help students think about root causes for their area of concern.
  + Ask each group to brainstorm one or two ideas.
  + Ask the facilitator to put both ideas on chart paper using the action plan template as a guide.
* Pitch the idea to the larger group.
* Revise action plans based on feedback.
  + Complete the action plan template as a group.
* Report final plans.
  + Create a plan for next steps.

1. Close the meeting.

**SPRING MEETING AGENDA**

1. Conduct an icebreaker or team-building activity.
2. Establish the group norm setting.
3. Review action plans from the fall:

* What progress has been made?
* What still needs to be done?

1. Make predictions about the data.

* Use the prediction worksheets.
* Ask students to make predictions about the Student Perception Survey (SPS) data on their own.
* Hand out survey results to students and ask them to write down the actual data.
* Ask students to discuss the difference between their predictions and the actual data.

1. Review the SPS data.
   * Break students into groups according to the following survey categories:

* Student learning
* Student-centered environment
* Classroom community
* Classroom management
  + Review results in each category.
    - * For each question, ask students:

What surprises you?

What does the distribution of responses (number of students that said “always,” “never,” etc.) tell you?

How did the results change from last year?

* + - * Ask students to identify one or two areas of concern on chart paper. Tell them to consider the following:

The item with the biggest decrease

The item with the lowest score

The item with the biggest difference between your school and the state

The item that received a fine score but could still be improved

1. Facilitate a conversation. Ask students to identify their top three concerns and explain why they are concerns.
2. Develop action plans.
   * Break students into three groups, one for each concern. Assign the following roles in each group:
     + - Facilitator
       - Recorder
       - Reporter
   * Create action plans.
     + - Assign an adult to each group to help students think about root causes for their area of concern.
       - Ask each group to brainstorm one or two ideas.
       - Ask the facilitator to put both ideas on chart paper using the action plan template as a guide.
   * Pitch the idea to the larger group.
   * Revise action plans based on feedback.
     + - Complete the action plan template as a group.
   * Report final plans.
     + - Create a plan for next steps.
3. Close the meeting.

**ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE**

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| **Area of concern:** |
| **What do you want to do?** |
| **How does this address the concern?** |
| **Group members:** |

| **What are the activities/steps involved?** | **When will these take place?** | **Student lead** | **Adult approval required?** |
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**PREDICTION WORKSHEET FOR GRADES 3-5**

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| **Student Learning:** *How teachers use content and pedagogical knowledge to help students learn, understand, and improve* | **Prediction:** Number of students in my school that said “always” | **Actual:** Number of students in my school that said “always” |
| The schoolwork we do helps me learn. |  |  |
| What I learn in this class is useful to me in my real life. |  |  |
| In this class, we learn a lot almost every day. |  |  |
| My teacher makes sure that we think hard about things we read and write. |  |  |
| When the work is too hard, my teacher helps me keep trying. |  |  |
| In this class, it is more important to understand the lesson than to memorize the answers. |  |  |
| My teacher uses a lot of different ways to explain things. |  |  |
| My teacher knows when we understand the lesson and when we do not. |  |  |
| Our classroom materials and supplies have a special place, and things are easy to find. |  |  |
| In this class, we learn to correct our mistakes. |  |  |
| My teacher tells us what we are learning and why. |  |  |
| My teacher asks questions to be sure we are following along. |  |  |
| My teacher talks to me about my work to help me understand my mistakes. |  |  |
| My teacher writes notes on my work that help me do better next time. |  |  |
| The schoolwork we do is interesting. |  |  |
| **Student-Centered Environment:** *How teachers create an environment that responds to individual students’ backgrounds, strengths, and interests* | **Prediction:** Number of students in my school that said “always” | **Actual:** Number of students in my school that said “always” |
| My teacher wants us to share what we think. |  |  |
| My teacher teaches us to respect people’s differences. |  |  |
| My teacher knows what makes me excited about learning. |  |  |
| My teacher talks about things we learn in other classes, subjects, and years. |  |  |
| If I am sad or angry, my teacher helps me feel better. |  |  |
| My teacher would notice if something was bothering me. |  |  |
| The people we learn and read about in this class are like me. |  |  |
| My teacher knows what my life is like outside of school. |  |  |
| My teacher knows what is important to me. |  |  |
| Students feel comfortable sharing their ideas in this class. |  |  |

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| **Classroom Community:** *How teachers cultivate a classroom learning community where student differences are valued* | **Prediction:** Number of students in my school that said “always” | **Actual:** Number of students in my school that said “always” |
| My teacher cares about me. |  |  |
| In this class, I feel like I fit in. |  |  |
| I feel like an important part of my classroom community. |  |  |
| I ask for help when I need it. |  |  |
| I feel like I do a good job in this class. |  |  |
| **Classroom Management:** *How teachers foster a respectful and predictable learning environment* | **Prediction:** Number of students in my school that said “always” | **Actual:** Number of students in my school that said “always” |
| Our class stays busy and does not waste time. |  |  |
| Students in my class are respectful to our teacher. |  |  |
| My classmates behave the way my teacher wants them to. |  |  |
| All of the kids in my class know what they are supposed to be doing and learning. |  |  |

**PREDICTION WORKSHEET FOR GRADES 6-12**

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| **Student Learning:** *How teachers use content and pedagogical knowledge to help students learn, understand, and improve* | **Prediction:** Number of students in my school that said “always” | **Actual:** Number of students in my school that said “always” |
| My teacher makes learning enjoyable. |  |  |
| What I learn in this class is useful to me in my real life. |  |  |
| My teacher teaches things that are important to me. |  |  |
| My teacher knows the things that make me excited about learning. |  |  |
| In this class, we learn a lot every day. |  |  |
| In this class, it is more important to understand the lesson than to memorize the answers. |  |  |
| When the work is too hard, my teacher helps me keep trying. |  |  |
| My teacher accepts nothing less than my best effort. |  |  |
| My teacher knows when we understand the lesson and when we do not. |  |  |
| If I don’t understand something, my teacher explains it a different way. |  |  |
| My teacher explains difficult things clearly. |  |  |
| In this class, we have a say in what we learn and do. |  |  |
| My teacher talks to me about my work to help me understand my mistakes. |  |  |
| My teacher writes notes on my work that help me improve. |  |  |
| When we study a topic, my teacher makes connections to other subjects or classes. |  |  |
| **Student-Centered Environment:** *How teachers create an environment that responds to individual students’ backgrounds, strengths, and interests* | **Prediction:** Number of students in my school that said “always” | **Actual:** Number of students in my school that said “always” |
| My classroom is organized, and I know where to find what I need. |  |  |
| Students feel comfortable sharing their ideas in this class. |  |  |
| My teacher respects my opinions and suggestions. |  |  |
| My teacher cares about me. |  |  |
| My teacher pays attention to what all students are thinking and feeling. |  |  |
| My teacher respects my cultural background. |  |  |
| My teacher respects me as an individual. |  |  |

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| **Classroom Community:** *How teachers cultivate a classroom learning community where student differences are valued* | **Prediction:** Number of students in my school that said “always” | **Actual:** Number of students in my school that said “always” |
| My teacher would notice if something was bothering me. |  |  |
| Our classroom materials (books, articles, videos, art, music, posters, etc.) reflect my cultural background. |  |  |
| In this class, I feel like I fit in. |  |  |
| I feel like an important part of this classroom community. |  |  |
| My teacher knows what my life is like outside of school. |  |  |
| My teacher knows what is important to me. |  |  |
| I ask for help when I need it. |  |  |
| I feel like I do a good job in this class. |  |  |
| **Classroom Management:** *How teachers foster a respectful and predictable learning environment* | **Prediction:** Number of students in my school that said “always” | **Actual:** Number of students in my school that said “always” |
| Our class stays busy and does not waste time. |  |  |
| Students in this class treat the teacher with respect. |  |  |
| The students behave the way my teacher wants them to. |  |  |
| Students in this class respect each other’s differences. |  |  |