

How did CEI engage students in creating the SPS?

The Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) developed [Colorado's Student Perception Survey](#) (SPS) in 2012 to provide teachers with actionable student feedback. One of the most common questions from educators is: How did CEI engage students in creating the SPS?

One of the key purposes of the SPS is to provide students with a formal, fair, and valid mechanism to give teachers feedback. CEI recognized the importance of student involvement in testing, evaluating, and refining the survey, and engaged students throughout the entire process.

Think-aloud interviews

An important step in developing assessments and surveys is ensuring that respondents are interpreting the questions as intended. One way to ensure clarity is through think-aloud interviews, where respondents are asked to talk through each question and their response as they complete the survey.

For each grade span (grades 3-5 and grades 6-12), CEI selected students from various grade levels and demographic areas, including students from each of the following groups:

- Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch
- Students of color
- ELLs
- Students with disabilities
- Geographic diversity with regard to region (e.g., across school districts) and setting (e.g., urban, suburban, and rural)

Overall, the results from the think-aloud interviews were positive, but also resulted in minor wording changes to survey questions. Below are some direct quotes from students who participated in the think-aloud interviews:

- **My teacher uses a lot of different ways to explain things.** *"Definitely. If one person says they do not understand, she tells three or four other ways to explain it, and even if no one raises their hand she still gives other ways of explaining because she knows it can be embarrassing to say you don't understand."* (fifth-grader)
- **I feel like an important part of my classroom community.** *"Always. This means to help learn and support my class, be kind and respectful. I feel like my class is a good community."* (third-grader)
- **My teacher accepts nothing less than my best effort.** *"Always. He would always know for every student, and especially for me, if I was distracted or not engaged, or if I didn't get the grade I deserved on the test he would ask me if I was making wise choices."* (11th-grader)

Open-ended responses

One of the key purposes of the SPS is to provide students with a formal, fair, and valid mechanism to give teachers feedback.

During the spring pilot, students also shared open-ended responses to the question, "Do you have any other thoughts or feedback for your teacher?" This question was initially included to evaluate the tenor of student comments and determine if students were taking the survey process seriously. In fact, teachers reported that it provided such powerful feedback that it was formally integrated into Colorado's Student Perception Survey.

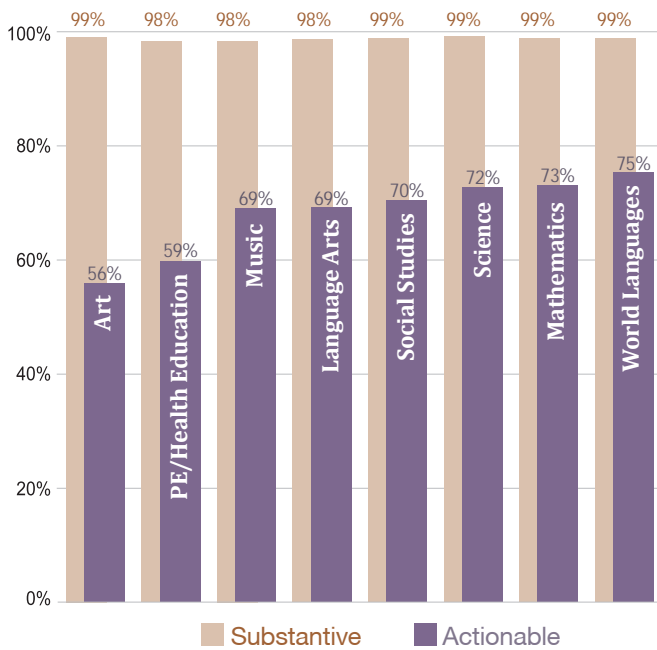


Student Engagement Quick Facts

- A diverse group of students participated in 30- to 45-minute think-aloud interviews.
- Over 70,000 student surveys were collected during the SPS pilot (fall 2012 and spring 2013).
- More than 14,500 students shared open-ended responses during the spring pilot.

Overall, results from [a robust analysis](#) of this question suggest that the majority of students did take the survey process seriously. Of the 14,539 student responses to the open-ended question, just under 99 percent were considered *substantive*, meaning they were on topic and provided general information about what the student thought about his or her teacher. Additionally, two-thirds of student responses (N = 9,646; 66.3 percent) were coded as *actionable*, meaning they contained specific feedback that could likely be acted upon by teachers. Furthermore, the percentage of students providing substantive feedback was consistent across subjects and grade levels. This indicates that students are able to respond thoughtfully about instruction in all grades and subjects. With regard to actionable feedback, results suggest that students in some subjects and grades were slightly more likely to provide actionable feedback (e.g., students in higher grades and in core academic subjects). However, actionable responses came from students in **all** grades (3-12) and from a variety of classrooms (including music, art, and physical education), and the graphs below show that by grade 5, students' feedback across content areas is approximately as actionable as feedback from students in grade 12.

Substantive and Actionable Student Responses by Subject



Substantive and Actionable Student Responses by Grade Level



Themes from open-ended responses

In general, the actionable responses from students can be categorized into the following 11 themes:

- Help for understanding
- Personal relationships
- Care
- Content knowledge
- Preparation for the future
- Instruction
- Classroom management
- Respect
- Grading
- Justice/fairness
- Student voice and choice

Quotes from open-ended responses

Below are some direct quotes from open-ended responses:

- *"... You are the best teacher this year for me. I'm a very visual learner and all the experiment[s] help me understand. So thanks for actually getting me to like science again."*
- *"She tends to teach with just speaking and not much examples/doing. ... I often have a hard time understanding the tougher concepts because of this."*
- *"My teacher understands that people learn in different ways and so she does a great job of challenging the advanced kids, giving the average kids work for their level of understanding, and giving the struggling kids plenty of reassuring help and encouragement."*



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We encourage you to review the answers to other common questions about the SPS and explore other resources associated with student perception surveys. Visit the [Student Perception Survey Toolkit](#) for more information.

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