Data-Driven Human Capital Strategies

HOW TO GUIDE:

Survey Stakeholders

This how-to guide provides high-level information about how to **design and implement a perception survey to support continuous improvement of local initiatives, so that they can better improve student learning**. This guide can be used by school and Local Education Agency (LEA) leaders.

WHAT ARE PERCEPTION DATA?

Perception data describe the attitudes, beliefs, judgments, opinions and experiences of specific stakeholders. Perception data are primarily gathered using surveys, interviews and focus groups and may be represented quantitatively or qualitatively. Perception data are often used to describe topics such as stakeholder buy-in, self-efficacy, and descriptions of practices. Perception data can be used to describe people's beliefs about impact, but they do not provide evidence of changes in outcomes such as student achievement.

Why gather perception data through surveys?

Gathering and analyzing perception data is part of a larger **data analysis process** which — when done strategically — increases the likelihood of LEA initiatives meeting their goals for student learning outcomes (see the how-to guide on analyzing human capital data **available here**). Such data can be a powerful tool for schools and LEAs in their work, whether launching a new initiative, supporting the use of effective practices with students, or promoting a positive school culture and climate.

- **Perception data from students and families** can offer insights into trusting relationships, student engagement, high expectations, and access to high quality learning experiences.

- **Perception data from teachers** can offer insights into teacher knowledge, self-efficacy, educator career aspirations, and attitudes toward students and colleagues.

- **Perception data from educator preparation programs, teacher candidates, and newly-hired teachers** can offer insights into the effectiveness of the LEA's teacher recruitment activities.

- **Perception data from school leaders** can offer insights into how initiatives are implemented, how teachers are supported, and how data drive decision making.

Surveys are one of the most commonly used methods for gathering perception data. Surveys offer several benefits, such as cost-effectiveness; quick gathering and analysis of results; and clear tracking of changes over time. Using surveys can help schools and LEAs be better informed when designing new initiatives; likewise, surveys can help schools and LEAs track how current initiatives are being implemented over time to inform course corrections.

When to use surveys

When administering perception surveys, schools and LEAs should consider three factors:

1. **Survey timing:** Because surveys can be used to easily compare results over time, schools and LEAs should consider gathering perception data using surveys just prior to the launch of a new initiative (creating "baseline" data) and iteratively over time (e.g., once a year after initial implementation). For some initiatives, it may be most appropriate to wait at least one year after implementation to gather perception data on implementation and impact.

2. **Survey fatigue:** Administering a survey too often may result in lower participation rates and less accurate results; if trying to capture changes in a short period of time, schools and LEAs can include survey items asking respondents about perceived changes directly in a single survey rather than comparing survey results over time.

3. **Capacity to complete surveys:** Schools and LEAs should avoid administering surveys during busy periods in the school year (e.g., state testing). If possible, schools can utilize existing meeting periods to allow teachers time to complete surveys.

How to gather perception data through surveys

There are five main steps in administering a survey:

- **Survey design & development (step 1) and testing (step 2):** Schools and LEAs can use survey guidance and sample items (such as those linked in the resources on **page 4**) to guide their development and testing of a perception survey. Steps 1 and 2 have the most critically important requirements for success: survey science to ensure that the survey is valid, reliable, and technically functional. Teachers and school leaders should be involved in survey design and development; however, schools and LEAs should ensure that at least one person involved in survey design and development has the expertise to ensure the survey's validity, reliability, and technical function. Schools and LEAs can reach out to their Intermediate Units, university partners, or other support systems to explore potential supports for survey development and testing. Some LEAs work with external vendors; Pittsburgh Public Schools has worked with Tripod Education Partners to collect perception data such as students' perspectives on **school and classroom conditions**.

- **Survey administration (step 3):** Administration merely requires a platform for the survey (e.g., Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, a web platform with unique e-mail IDs, fillable PDF forms). Different platforms allowed varied complexity in the survey structure (e.g., "skip" logic design).

- **Analysis of results (step 4) and sharing of results (step 5):** The final steps require some background and ideally expertise in data analysis, although the level of skill required depends on the complexity of the survey design and platform. When sharing results, consider the intended audiences, and be sure the language you use is accessible to those who are less data-savvy.

Additional survey resources

Panorama Education offers free survey tools — including sample survey items — for various school stakeholders at **https://www.panoramaed.com/resources**

The following three links provide guidance on writing survey items:

- **Zapier Surveys 101** (**https://zapier.com/learn/forms-surveys/writing-effective-survey/**)

- **Harvard University Program on Survey Research Tip Sheet on Question Wording** (**https://psr.iq.harvard.edu/files/psr/files/PSRQuestionnaireTipSheet_0.pdf**)

- **SurveyMonkey's Guide to Writing Survey Questions Like a Pro** (**https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/writing-survey-questions/**)

For the full Human Capital Strategies resource series,
visit **http://www.iu13.org/school-improvement/**

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