Stakeholder Feedback Surveys as Indicators of Teaching Effectiveness

JONATHAN SCHWEIG, LAURA S. HAMILTON

Growing numbers of districts and states rely on surveys to gather input from education stakeholders, such as students, families, or school staff (including teachers). These surveys sometimes supplement other measures of teaching effectiveness or are included alongside these measures as part of a comprehensive teacher-evaluation model. According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, as of 2019, seven states required student surveys as components of teacher feedback and evaluation systems, and an additional 24 states permitted the use of student surveys in teacher evaluation. Survey data are often aggregated to the school level to track improvement, evaluate educational interventions, and emphasize school and district priorities.

Stakeholder surveys address a broad range of topics related to school and classroom climate.

Schools, districts, and states use surveys to capture perspectives on diverse topics, including the quality of instruction; student intellectual, emotional, and physical safety; the quality of interactions among individuals in the school community; the availability of resources; and the quality of the physical environment. These topics all relate to what is often called school or classroom climate. Stakeholders, such as parents and students, often have perspectives on school experiences that are not captured or observed by other sources. The perspectives of different stakeholders are likely to vary, and sometimes schools seek multiple perspectives to obtain a more complete picture. Many schools, districts, and states have begun to measure climate systematically in response to evidence that a positive climate contributes to students’ academic, social, and emotional development.

Some types of surveys can be used for teacher-level feedback and evaluation.

Because many aspects of climate can be influenced by teachers’ practices, surveys can play a valuable role in teacher feedback and evaluation systems. However, many existing surveys may be unsuitable for this purpose. Surveys used to provide evaluative information about individual teachers should typically (1) focus on aspects of the classroom environment and instructional practices that teachers can influence, (2) ask questions about the specific teacher or classroom rather than the school as a whole, and (3) be administered to a sufficiently large number of stakeholders (students, parents, or, in some cases, teachers’ peers) to provide reasonably accurate and reliable data. Information from surveys can also help educators uncover trends, identify areas for growth, support teacher reflection on their practices, and promote collaborative discussion among colleagues.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?
To access other fact sheets in this series, as well as reports, multimedia products, and more or visit www.rand.org/teacher-effectiveness.
Student perceptions typically differ within the same classroom, but survey ratings generally have high reliability. Research has consistently shown that surveys can be used to distinguish reliably between the culture and climate of different classrooms, and survey-based measures of culture and climate have shown meaningful relationships with other measures of teaching quality and the learning environment. However, there is often variability among ratings provided by students within the same class, and it can be valuable to look beyond class-wide averages (e.g., by examining results for racial and/or ethnic subgroups). This information can help teachers assess the extent to which they are providing equitable experiences to students.

Related Readings


About This Research
According to the authors, stakeholder surveys address a broad range of topics related to school and classroom climate. Some types of surveys can be used for teacher-level feedback. This research in the public interest was supported by RAND, using discretionary funds made possible by the generosity of RAND’s donors and the fees earned on client-funded research.

About RAND Education and Labor
This study was undertaken by RAND Education and Labor, a division of the RAND Corporation that conducts research on early childhood through postsecondary education programs, workforce development, and programs and policies affecting workers, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy and decisionmaking.

More information about RAND can be found at www.rand.org. Questions about this document should be directed to Jonathan_Schweig@rand.org or Laura_Hamilton@rand.org, and questions about RAND Education and Labor should be directed to educationandlabor@rand.org.

The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest. RAND’s publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients or sponsors.

© 2019 RAND Corporation | Photo: TongRo Images Inc/Getty Images

Limited Print and Electronic Distribution Rights: This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law. This representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for noncommercial use only. Unauthorized posting of this publication online is prohibited. Permission is given to duplicate this document for personal use only, as long as it is unaltered and complete. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of our research documents for commercial use. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please visit www.rand.org/pubs/permissions.