AdvancED™

Guide to Administering Surveys

and

Generalizing Survey Results

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AdvancED® Stakeholder Surveys

The AdvancED Stakeholder Surveys are designed for an educational institution to gather data on its stakeholders' perceptions, opinions and overall knowledge of various facets of the institution. Administering the suite of surveys-student, staff, and parent surveys- fulfills one accreditation requirement for all types of educational institutions: public, school system, private, international, faith-based, early learning centers, corporations, or distance learning.

Survey data results are an essential source of data for any institution that desires to "see the institution through the eyes of its stakeholders" and to understand how it can improve its governance, instructional program, resources and support for students, and stakeholder involvement. Survey results should serve as one of several powerful pieces of data an institution's leadership uses to inform its improvement planning and organizational effectiveness efforts. Because of the changing dynamics associated with educational institutions, it is considered an effective practice to administer surveys to stakeholders on an annual basis. Institutions should purposefully seek internal and external stakeholders' perceptions as a means to initiate or sustain communication efforts, become aware of the institution's perception from different viewpoints, improve stakeholder relationships, and increase stakeholders' knowledge of the institution.

The AdvancED surveys can be self-administered by an institution at any time; there are no limitations or restrictions as to when or how frequently the surveys are used, or to which groups of stakeholders the institution determines completes the surveys. On Page 6 of this guide, specific information is provided on the minimum response rate for accreditation purposes and tips to increase the response rates. AdvancED Stakeholder Surveys are easily accessible in the AdvancED Adaptive System of School Improvement Support Tools (ASSIST®) platform by visiting www.advanc-ed.org/assist.

Structure of the Stakeholder Surveys

Each stakeholder survey statement is aligned to the *AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools* and *AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems*; the statements are written to elicit the perceptions students, parents, and staff has of their school's performance. The survey statements require the stakeholder to respond from a personal perspective, such as "My school" or "My child's teacher," rather than from a collective perspective, such as "Our principal" or "Our school."

The survey perception statements are arranged in sections that are consistent with the order the AdvancED Standards are presented: (1) Purpose and Direction; (2) Governance and Leadership; (3) Teaching and Assessing for Learning; (4) Resources and Support Systems and; (5) Using Results for Continuous Improvement. The Standard's heading precedes the set of survey items that align to the specific Standard; this format was intentional so as to provide the respondents a context for the subsequent survey items.

Institutions have the option of offering the AdvancED Stakeholder Surveys to their stakeholders in a web-based or paper format. The online surveys are presently available in English, with plans to translate the online surveys in Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin, and French Creole. Paper surveys are provided in **all** languages mentioned. There is no cost to administer any of the online or paper surveys in the AdvancED Survey System; however, a minimal cost is incurred for shipping paper survey answer sheets, if the institution chooses this option. Survey reports are provided at no cost for the online or paper administration. An institution might make available both online and paper surveys to meet the needs of its stakeholders. For example, offering the web-based format for staff and students and the paper format for parents allows the institution to customize survey administration to meet the needs of its targeted survey respondents.

As the surveys are designed to measure perceptions and opinions, survey responses are aggregated over items and persons within the same institution to provide measurements that reflect the collective perceptions of a respondent group (e.g., elementary students). Each item requests the respondent rate his/her opinion using a five-point scale of "Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, and Not Applicable." For students in grades K-5, a three-point scale is used with emoticons instead of a numerical scale. Additionally, all surveys have two or three open-ended questions that give the respondents an opportunity to further express their opinions about the institution without any rating scale or specific question to frame the responses.

All surveys have been assessed to ensure the vocabulary and sentence structure are understandable from a reasonable reading level for each stakeholder group. The chart displays the readability level (based on the United States grade levels) for each stakeholder survey. For example, the score of 7.7 on the Parent Survey indicates the survey statements should be comprehensible by a parent who reads at the seventh to eighth grade level or has a minimum of a seventh or eighth grade education.

Survey items were assessed for readability based on the:

Flesch Kincaid Readability Scale

Survey for:	Reading Level
K-2 grades	1.2
3-5 grades	3.5
6-12 grades	7.3
Staff	10.4
Staff (Early Learning)	9.9
Parents	7.7
Parents (Early Learning)	7.6

The Demographic Section

AdvancED thoroughly examined the various and most appropriate means to seek demographical information from its surveys to ensure the items and the information were appropriate for its world-wide network of educational institutions. For surveys administered domestically, the categories for "Race" and "Ethnicity" were based on the definitions and concepts provided by the Institute for Educational Sciences and the United States Census Bureau. For AdvancED's international network of institutions, different items appear in the demographics section since international schools are not restricted to the same guidelines for reporting demographics as domestic schools.

Example of the demographic section on the Student Survey for domestic schools:

Demographics on Domestic Student Surveys (example)

Information About Me
1. **Gender**
01 = Male02 = Female

2. **Race**
01 = American Indian or Alaska Native
02 = Asian
03 = Black or African American
04 = Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
05 = White
06 = Two or more races

3. **Ethnicity**
01 = Hispanic
02 =Not Hispanic or Latino

For each category in the 'For Demographics' Section of the surveys, the respondent chooses the option. This example is similar to how the demographics section appears on the paper surveys. The categories are exactly the same on the online surveys.

Demographics on International Student Surveys (example)

Information About Me
1. **Gender**
   01   Male 02 = Female
2. **Region Where You Were Born**
   01 = Africa   02 = Antarctica
   03 = Asia   04 = Europe
   05 = Latin America (Mexico, Central America, South America)
   06 = Middle East   07 = North America
   08 = Oceania (New Zealand, Australia, Pacific Islands)
   09 = The Caribbean

For a more complete preview of the demographic information requested on each survey, survey items, and survey format, visit http://extranet.advanc-ed.org/assist_surveys_preview/. This resource page also contains a list of the surveys translated into Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin, and French Creole. Please note that these sample surveys are not in the same format as the online surveys; however, the content is the same for paper and online surveys.

Factorial Validity and Reliability of the Surveys

Following the re-development of the Opinion Inventory Series, AdvancED conducted a study to evaluate the reliability and validity (factorial) of the redesigned Opinion Surveys. Sampling and data collection for this pilot study was conducted by AdvancED March-May 2011, and the statistical analyses were conducted by independent consultants with expertise in survey methodology and psychometrics. Participating were 19,982 elementary students, 25,427 middle- and high-school students, 12,516 parents of students in selected schools, and 8,323 staff and teachers from 285 schools that are accredited by or seeking accreditation from AdvancED. These data were subjected to multilevel factor analysis aimed at determining the number and nature of factors that are measured by the surveys, to evaluate the validity of each item, and to estimate the reliability for the scale scores. Correlations between school characteristics variables (e.g., accreditation status, enrollment size) and opinion survey results also were examined. All items were supported as valid and reliable, and reliability estimates of a composite score of a school performance on the survey computed by averaging over items and respondents within the same school indicated exceptionally high reliability (i.e., very minimal measurement error).

Preparing for Survey Administration

Before the institution begins its preparation to administer surveys, staff members should engage in thoughtful discussions about the purpose of eliciting feedback from its stakeholders and the impact the results could have on pending decisions related to instruction, budget, resource allocations, programs, and procedures. Specific questions, such as those included in the table on Page 6, can be used to guide the dialogues during professional learning communities or during whole group staff meetings. The institution's leadership can share the link in advance with the staff members to review the surveys items and prepare their questions and suggestions for the discussions with colleagues (www.advanc-ed.org/assistresources). Staff members will emerge as good "ambassadors" of the survey process if they are fully informed of why the institution is engaging in the survey process, what types of items appear on the surveys, and how to answer questions from students and parents about the survey process.

These questions can promote dialogues among staff members:

For the Accreditation Protocol and Improvement Planning	Possible Responses
What are the objectives for administering the surveys to each stakeholder group?	To understand various perspectives of stakeholders; to improve communication with stakeholders; to gain valuable data for decision-making
How will the survey results be used for improvement planning and/or as evidence for the Self-Assessment, improvement plan, Executive Summary, and Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic?	To inform decision-making for improvement planning; to provide information to guide the institution's decisions during the internal review process
In what ways will the results of the surveys be shared with the stakeholders?	Through the use of Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn; face-to-face meetings with stakeholders; on the institution's website; in weekly messages and/or quarterly or annual reports from leadership team

Administering Surveys

Effective and efficient survey administration requires the establishment of a plan and timeline that are facilitated and managed by the institution's leader or a designated staff member. Regardless of who serves in the capacity to oversee the survey process, the person needs to devote the time to plan the survey administration, communicate before, during and after the survey window, and monitor all stages of the process to ensure the surveys are administered with fidelity and the response rate meets the institution's expectation.

These questions can inform the survey administration planning phase:

For the Accreditation Protocol and Improvement Planning	Possibilities
When should the surveys be administered so that the results can be used to inform improvement planning? When should the surveys be administered so that the results are used as evidence for accreditation purposes?	Check the timing of the survey administration to ensure there is an approximate **two-week window** of time that does not conflict with standardized testing, holidays, breaks from school (e.g. fall break), grading periods, beginning of the school year, ending of the school year, religious holidays, community events, etc.
For what length of time should the survey window be open?	A minimum of 14 days
Which stakeholders should have access to complete the surveys? All students? All staff? All parents?	• Consider administering the survey to all grade levels or target specific grade levels • Determine if all staff members complete the survey (e.g., cafeteria staff, bookkeepers, part-time staff) • Decide if parents of students in specific grade levels complete the survey or if all parents associated with the institution have access to the survey
For the Accreditation Protocol and Improvement Planning	**Possibilities**
What is the desired response rate for each stakeholder group?	**At a minimum:** 20% response rate from parents 40% response rate from students 60% response rate from staff
Which survey format will match the stakeholders' needs? Online or paper or both?	Students and Staff: online Parents: paper and online
Which languages should the surveys be made available and to which stakeholders?	Be certain to consider all languages the stakeholders feel most comfortable reading and provide the appropriate translated survey (paper) to them

Inform stakeholders.

- Be certain that a communication plan is established so that during the entire survey process, stakeholders are fully informed. Communicate with stakeholders a week or two weeks prior to the survey administration to:

   1. build awareness of the process and timeline;
   2. assure all responses are anonymous;
   3. emphasize purpose and importance of their feedback;
   4. underscore how the results will be used for improvement purposes;
   5. share a preview of the survey items;
   6. encourage high participation rate and;
   7. establish or maintain a culture of transparency.

Begin the planning process.

- Ensure the survey administration dates are on the institution's calendar.
- Review all of the institution's protocols, policies, and procedures during the planning phase to avoid any potential conflicts or changes once the survey process has begun.
- Determine the time intervals various communications are disseminated to all stakeholders *(see Exhibit A)*.
- Use an organizer for efficient use of time *(see Exhibit B).*

Follow the pre-determined survey distribution method for each stakeholder group.

- Follow the instructions in ASSIST to administer the online and/or paper surveys. AdvancED encourages schools and school systems to deploy the survey format that meets the needs of the stakeholders and garners the highest participation rate from all stakeholder groups.
- Monitor the response rate of each stakeholder survey and make adjustments if necessary, such as offering a different format (paper instead of online, or make both available), or announcing the survey window is extended.

Develop and disseminate communication to stakeholders.

- Write concise and informative messages to the stakeholders at three intervals: the first notification or announcement about the surveys, an invitation to participate, and reminder to complete the survey (*See Exhibits C, D and E for samples of communications).*

Keep staff members informed of the survey process.

- Frequent updates to staff members are a subtle way to remind them to complete the survey and to encourage students and parents to participate in the process.

- Share with staff members effective ideas they can use to motivate parents to complete the survey. Remind staff members **not** to offer students bonus points, extra credit, homework passes, etc., or penalize them for their parents' lack of participation in the survey process.

Here are a few ideas for generating and increasing parent participation:

Ideas to Increase Participation

1. Make a couple of computers accessible in an open area (e.g., office area) for parents during the survey timeframe.
2. Open the computer lab before school hours, after school hours, and in the evening during the survey timeframe.
3. Post reminders on the institution's Facebook page and through Twitter.
4. Write messages on the school or school system's website, weekly newsletters, and other communications to convey the importance of their perceptions and how the survey results will be used for improvement.
5. Have parent volunteers stationed in the parking lot at the end of the day with paper surveys, along with clip boards and pencils. Some parents will be happy to complete the survey while waiting in the car pool line!
6. Solicit parent volunteers to make telephone calls to other parents to remind them to complete the survey.

Survey Reports

Results from surveys administered in the online format quickly can be downloaded from ASSIST every 24 hours during and after the survey administration process. Since the completed paper surveys must be shipped to AdvancED and then scanned, these results are accessible in ASSIST within 20 business days of receipt of the shipment of surveys. If both web and paper surveys are administered, the results are combined into a single report and accessible after the paper survey results are available.

The information provided in the chart below summarizes the types of survey data and reports accessible from the AdvancED Survey System. The AdvancED Survey System in ASSIST allows the institution a variety of options to aggregate and disaggregate its survey data that includes exporting the data into an Excel, PDF, or CSV file.

Survey Reports in ASSIST	Description of Results for Institutions
Aggregated Results	Provides collective survey responses by demographic data, section and question
Disaggregated Results	Provides separate survey responses by demographic data, section and question
Survey Data Export	Provides demographic survey responses, Likert Scale-Based responses, open-ended responses in Excel
Survey Response Count by Demographic	Provides summarized counts of responses to Likert scale questions and disaggregated by the selected demographic
Survey Response Count Summary	Shows number and percentage of responses for each item on the Likert scale and by section and question
Survey Scoring Summary	Shows average score by standard, institution, and overall score

Generalizing the Results

Stakeholder survey results can provide the institution with insightful quantitative and qualitative data for use in decision-making and improvement planning. Survey data results- no matter the results or gaps between "strongly agree and strongly disagree"- should be regarded as one piece of data, and not the only data used to determine significant program, budget, personnel, or instructional changes or additions. When survey data are used in conjunction with other data, such as student performance data, attendance data, and/or discipline data, similar patterns that emerge should be strongly considered. The institution should use the data to inform where it needs to focus its improvement or sustainability efforts. If survey results are widely distributed, then institution's leadership could generalize there is considerable confusion or lack of knowledge about the specific item or practice at the institution. Another scenario to consider is when the majority of the responses are "strongly agree and agree" for a survey item, then discussions need to occur among staff members about how to sustain this positive perception. In other words, the results can be generalized to inform the institution's leaders and its stakeholders about specific practices stated in the survey.

These examples describe how to generalize one item's results on a school's survey:

Survey	Item	Percentages	One Generalization	The Institution Could...
Staff survey	...protects instructional time	13% Strongly Agree 11% Agree 13% Neutral 42% Disagree 21% Strongly Disagree 2% N/A	With 24% staff members responding positively and 63% responding negatively, the institution might conclude there is a problem with the number of interruptions, school assemblies, or other types of "breaks" in the instructional day	• examine other survey items for a connection • review the school calendar and daily schedule • discuss this topic in professional learning communities to explore best practices to implement • analyze who is interrupting, what is the disruption, when is the interruption most frequent (time of day)
Parent	...helps me to understand my child's progress	33% Strongly Agree 39% Agree 9% Neutral 10% Disagree 9% Strongly Disagree 0% N/A	With 72% of the parents staff members responding positively and 19% responding negatively, the institution might conclude it meets the needs of parents (those that responded to the survey) in how teachers discuss student's grades, behavior, and overall progress	• conduct short questionnaire to administer to parents for additional, more granular information on how to improve the communication • have teachers share during professional learning communities, grade level meetings, and through social media their unique and effective means to inform parents of student progress
Student (6-12)	...provide me with information about my learning and grades.	18% Strongly Agree 27% Agree 11% Neutral 29% Disagree 15% Strongly Disagree 0% N/A	With an almost even split between positive and negative perceptions, the institution might conclude there is inconsistency among teachers as to how they inform students about grades and progress	• talk with students during advisor/advisee time about perceptions • ask students questions about what is working/not working determine what practices teachers use to inform students • share best practices establish school-wide expectation • monitor for consistency

Analyzing Survey Data with Demographic Information

Analyzing the survey results from a demographic perspective can provide the institution a new awareness of a stakeholder group's perceptions regarding the specific topics addressed on the survey. Survey data in ASSIST can be disaggregated by one demographic filter such as gender, race, ethnicity, title, years of experience, etc. The demographics are different depending on the survey. The ability to disaggregate reports based on multiple demographics is an enhancement AdvancED plans for a future release. As an example, an institution might find it useful to compare survey results between new staff members and experienced staff members to understand how the two groups view the institution in terms of how the school protects the instructional time. Understanding these perceptions could lead the institution's leaders to conduct follow-up surveys, analyze deeper a multitude of data, and examine processes and procedures. The chart below is an example of the demographics disaggregated by "experience" for the Staff Survey item, "…protects instructional time".

Section: Resources and Support Systems

Demographics	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Applicable		Total	
1-3 years	1	16.67%	4	66.67%	0	0%	1	16.67%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
11-20 years	0	0%	18	90%	1	5%	1	5%	0	0%	0	0%	20	100%
4-10 years	1	7.14%	6	42.86%	3	21.43%	3	21.43%	1	7.14%	0	0%	14	100%
Less than 1 year	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%
More than 20 years	0	0%	12	66.67%	5	27.78%	1	5.56%	0	0%	0	0%	18	100%

Generalizing the Demographic Data

A generalization can be made from the data presented in the chart that the majority of the staff members (41 of the staff members or 66.67%) agree the school protects instructional time. However, a deeper disaggregation indicate that for staff members with four to ten years of experience, over 50% are neutral or disagree with the survey statement, "… the school protects instructional time". With this percentage of staff members having conflicting perceptions from the other experience level groups, the institution's leaders could generalize that events, whether planned or unplanned, are perceived by these staff members as an interruption to the instructional time. The institution's leaders might consider the following questions to discover more information and to better comprehend the opinions of staff members with four to ten years of experience:

- How many assemblies, meetings, drills, etc., occur during instructional time?
- Is there one grade level or content area in which the assemblies, meetings, drills, etc. occur more often than at other times?
- Are students called out of class more frequently during certain times during the school day?
- What is your interpretation of an "interruption to the instructional time"?

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a community survey?

AdvancED is in the process of developing a Community Survey as a companion to the other stakeholder surveys.

Will the AdvancED surveys be provided in languages other than those currently available?

There are no current plans to provide additional survey translations, but if you have a strong need for an additional language, please submit a request to contactus@advanc-ed.org for future consideration.

Can we administer AdvancED survey content in a separate system (e.g., Survey Monkey)?

All survey content is the intellectual property of AdvancED and should not be replicated or administered outside of the AdvancED Survey System.

Can we scan our own paper survey results?

ASSIST does not support the importing or reporting of paper survey results scanned outside of AdvancED. Completed paper surveys should be returned to AdvancED for scanning and reporting. Instructions for returning the surveys can be found in the Paper Survey Administration Instructions posted at www.advanc-ed.org/assistresources.

Appendix

Exhibit A

Survey Process Organizer

==This chart can be used to track the opening and closing of the survey window for each stakeholder group, and the number of responses needed to meet the minimum response rate.==

Survey	Minimum Response Rate *	Start Date	Reminder Date	Close Date	Number of All Possible Stakeholders	Number of Responses Needed
Parent	20%					
Staff	60%					
Student (Early Elementary)	40%					
Student (Elementary)	40%					
Student (Middle/High)	40%					

For Accreditation Purposes

Exhibit B

Survey Administrator Organizer

<mark>This chart can be used to track the various ways the stakeholders receive communication to complete the surveys.</mark>

	Email	Website	Newsletter	Computer Lab	Paper (Additional Cost)	Other (Explain)
Parent						
• **Announcement**						
• **Notification**						
• **Reminder**						
Staff						
• **Announcement**						
• **Notification**						
• **Reminder**						
Student (Early Elementary)						
• **Announcement**						
• **Notification**						
• **Reminder**						
Student (Elementary)						
• **Announcement**						
• **Notification**						
• **Reminder**						
Student (Middle/High)						
• **Announcement**						
• **Notification**						
• **Reminder**						

Exhibit C

Sample Pre Survey Parent Communication (School System Accreditation)

Dear Parent/Guardian,

[*Insert school system name*] and all of its schools are engaged in an ongoing continuous improvement process, of which all stakeholders are an integral part. **[*Insert school system name*]** is using the AdvancED Parent Survey as a means to elicit your opinions to help target areas for the school system to improve and areas to continue to be effective. The five sections on the survey represent the five *AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems* and provide a means for learning about parent expectations of a high-quality school system.

Soon you will receive information on how to access the survey. Your cooperation and support in completing the parent survey will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

[Insert name]

[Insert title]

Exhibit D

Sample Parent Survey Communication (School System Accreditation)

Dear Parent/Guardian,

A few weeks ago, you were notified that [insert school system name] is administering the AdvancED Parent Survey in an effort to improve system practices. Your opinion is important to us, and we ask that you take the time to complete this survey. The online survey will be available from [*insert start and stop date*]. In order to complete the survey, please click on this link: [*Insert web link from ASSIST* or copy and paste the link into your browser.

Please be assured that your responses to this survey will be anonymous and your honest opinions are appreciated.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact [*insert name*] at [*insert email address*] or [*insert phone*]. Thank you in advance for supporting [insert school system name] improvement efforts.

Sincerely,

[*Insert name*]

[*Insert title*]

Exhibit E

Sample Parent Survey Reminder (School System Accreditation)

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Please be reminded that [*insert school system name*] is conducting a parent survey and your input is valued and needed. The survey only will be available until [*insert stop date*].
Please click on this *link [Insert web link from ASSIST*] to access the survey or copy and paste the link into your browser. Be assured that your responses to this survey will be anonymous and your honest opinions are appreciated.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact [*insert name*] at [*insert email address*] or [*insert phone*].

Sincerely,

[*Insert name*]

[*Insert title*]