

2021 NYC School Survey

How to Increase Family Engagement with the Survey

Schools that successfully engage families in DOE School Surveys are located in all five boroughs and serve diverse communities. The COVID-19 crisis has created challenging circumstances for administering citywide surveys to students, families and teachers. The best practices in this guide stem from successful family engagement during the recent, fully online Fall 2020 Experience Survey. Schools highlighted in this guide emphasize that their success was a combination of factors but most important was the strong foundation of trust cultivated year-round in their school communities. In this guide, schools share their best practices for promoting participation and supporting families in accessing and completing the parent/guardian survey.

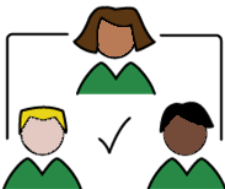
What can you do before survey administration?

Build Strong Relationships with Families



Creating a welcoming environment for parents and guardians that is built on trust will aid your outreach efforts. Strong connections cultivated with families before the pandemic have helped schools start the conversation about the annual NYC School Survey. Be sure to use whatever communication tools work best for your students' families. Schools with high family participation leverage meetings and communications already in place during remote learning, such as weekly parent Zoom meetings and the parent/guardian newsletters. Schools that go above and beyond also meet families where they are by proactively contacting to hard to reach families, by hosting virtual tutorials and Saturday classes for parents/guardians to increase computer literacy and providing translations during virtual meetings.

Assemble a Team



Recruit members from your school community to help plan survey administration and outreach to families at your school. Build a team that is composed of school community members such as guidance counselors, school aids, student government members and parent/guardian volunteers to join. Parent volunteers can help make personal phone calls to other families to encourage attendance to online info sessions or tutorials on completing the survey. Teachers can share the links to the survey in their communications with families. Last, but not least, schools with high family response rates leverage the expertise of their parent coordinators who are critical partners in building and maintaining strong relationships with students' families.

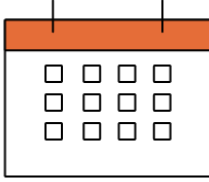
Review, Use & Share the Results



Parents want to have a voice in their students' learning, and it is important for them to see how the feedback they provide through the NYC School Survey is used. Schools with high family engagement are able to highlight how they plan to use survey results to inform planning and professional learning opportunities and how past results have supported continuous improvement at the school.

What can you do during survey administration?

Host Online Events



The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated the use of virtual meeting spaces in place of in-person events. Many schools with high rates of family participation in the Fall 2020 School Experience Survey partnered with PTAs and Parent Coordinators to introduce the school survey during their online events. Online meetings create the opportunity to raise awareness about the purpose of the survey, the dates of survey administration and most importantly, how to access the survey. A few schools have reported that they share their screen to walk families through the survey website and where to find the survey access link. Schedule virtual meetings that work best for your students' families which may include the evenings or weekends.

Provide Technical Support



Online meetings are most effective when they are accessible to as many members of your school community as possible. Many schools have already created virtual programming to support the learning of parents and guardians by holding recurring tutorial sessions to learn basic computer skills, learn how to use Zoom and navigate the DOE website to address their concerns and needs. Some creative schools recruited the support of students in their outreach to families by asking them to set up their parent's/guardian's first virtual meeting, especially those with limited computer skills. During online meetings, bi-lingual translators, parents/guardians and school aides were invited to support through the chat box. In this way, families could ask questions and receive answers and instruction in their language without barriers.

Make it Fun



Schools with high parent response rates often find ways to encourage participation through a variety of small incentives. Some examples are:

- A one day homework pass
- Every class to return 100% of their completed parent surveys gets entered into a virtual raffle (e.g. MTA cards for parents, small gift certificates, etc.)

Resources: Survey Ethics Reference Guide

Follow-up



The most effective strategies schools found for guaranteeing as many parents/guardians participated in the survey as possible was to track completion and follow up with a personal phone call from the principal or assistant principal, parent coordinator or other trusted staff members. Tracking the completion of surveys at your school can be done by logging on to Panorama Education's dashboard where completion of online surveys is updated in real-time. Schools also use automated message systems through their communication systems like PupilPath Scheduler or through RoboCalls to reach parents close to the survey deadline.



2021 NYC School Survey

Increasing Family Engagement: School Spotlights

Build Strong Relationships with Families

All of the schools that contributed to this best practices guide emphasized the importance of cultivating a school community based on connection and trust. The Parent Coordinator at **South Bronx Academy for Applied Media (07X296)** articulated this shared understanding best by saying “...it doesn’t just start with the survey, it starts from day one.” By establishing a sense of community through consistent and authentic communication with families, your school builds the foundation for any outreach effort, including the NYC School Survey. Framing the conversation about survey participation as an extension of the support a school provides is also key, where families understand that by giving their feedback, the school will work to make changes that better meets their needs. The parent coordinator also spoke of the school’s commitment to making sure immigrant parents/guardians felt safe by clearly stating that a family’s immigration status will in no way influence the level of support they will provide to the student and their family.

Manhattan Academy for Arts and Languages (02M427) articulated the same commitment to trust building within their school community. Through open dialogue and partnering with immigration clinics in their school, they have cultivated an environment where families are less fearful in filling out forms from the school, including the NYC School Survey.

All of the schools contributing to this best practices guide agree that framing the conversation about the survey relies on pre-existing relationships; make the survey relevant to families and they will see a reason to participate. **Frank Sinatra School of the Arts High School (30Q501)** advised creating the rationale around why you want the families to complete the survey and then communicate it out to them. And **Bard HS Early College (01M696)** emphasizes to families that the survey is not solely for the central DOE, but is feedback for their school that they will use to improve instruction and the experience of their students.

Assemble a Team

Several of the schools that had high rates of participation on the family survey portion of the School Expe-

rience Survey stated that building a diverse team to administer the survey was vital to their success. **Manhattan Academy for Arts and Languages (02M427)** shared that their team extended beyond the work of the principal and parent coordinator, but involved the collaboration of bilingual school aides, guidance counselors, APs and Paras. During the first week of survey administration, school aides were instrumental in making phone calls to families in multiple languages spoken by their students’ families.

Similarly, **Newcomers High School (30Q555)** highlighted the assistance of their bilingual school aides that provided invaluable translation support during virtual meetings, especially within the chat feature. Both schools utilized various tools to reach out to families which included WhatsApp, PupilPath Scheduler, School Messenger and answer questions about the school survey.

Review, Use and Share Results

Bard HS Early College (01M696) was intentional in their outreach efforts that included communicating with the parents of color affinity group within their school’s parent/guardian group. The AP and parent coordinator utilized the Panorama Education dashboard to view their daily survey results. They shared the data with their parents of color group and emphasized to families that this was their chance to make their voices heard so the school could better serve students and families of marginalized communities.

All of the schools utilized the live data available on the Panorama Education website to shape their approach to follow-up and targeted outreach. At **Frank Sinatra School of the Arts High School (30Q501)**, customized emails were scheduled to be sent through PupilPath more frequently as the survey close date approached. The principal also simplified access by embedding the link that led directly to the family survey in all communications.

Host Online Events

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all NYC schools became familiar with using online platforms such as Zoom and Google Chat. Schools with high parent and guardian response rates in the School Experience Survey leveraged planned events to maximize participa-

tion among families. **Newcomers High School (30Q555)** shared that they scheduled parent meetings at times that were most convenient for their families, which included Saturdays, which made it possible for them to increase their attendance to 80-100 people. They also leveraged other virtual meetings like college guidance and parent meetings to talk about the survey to increase participation before the survey closed.

Provide Technical Support

Decreasing the barriers to technology has been a central focus for all NYC schools throughout the pandemic. Schools focused on promoting families' access to devices and reliable internet as well as increasing computer literacy.

Manhattan Academy for Arts and Languages (02M427) found that many parents and guardians did not fill out the Fall School Experience Survey in part because they had limited or basic computer skills and, for some families, low literacy in their own language. The school held online trainings where they navigated the NYCDOE website, provided guidance on basic computer skills including the step-by-step process to set up their NYCSA accounts, helped locate the survey link and navigate the survey itself. They even involved students in helping their parents/guardians log in to their first Zoom meeting

In addition to technology, schools that provided extensive translation support during online meetings and events. **Newcomers High School (30Q555)** and **Manhattan Academy for Arts and Languages (02M427)** enlisted the help of school aides and parent volunteers in attendance at the meetings to translate in the chat boxes as well during the meeting in the languages spoken by their students and families. Newcomers High School made sure to include visuals in meeting slides that reinforced what was discussed so parent/guardians of ELLs/MLLs could follow along with less difficulty.

Technical support does not only occur during online events but can also be done through follow-up and outreach. The parent coordinator at **South Bronx Academy for Applied Media (07X296)** used *Talking Points* to translate emails in English to one of the 9 NYCDOE supported languages spoken by her school's families.

Make it Fun

South Bronx Academy for Applied Media (07X296) also shared their creative strategy for incentivizing survey completion for students and families. Before COVID-19 school closures, South Bronx Academy created "Scholar Bucks" that students would receive once they and their families completed the survey. They leveraged their relationships with CBOs in the school building to gift the families entered into the raffle key chains, canned foods, a crockpot, and cleaning supplies.

Once schools closed, the school decided to convert scholar buck to "virtual bucks" that served the same purpose and could be received by students once they and their families completed the Fall 2020 Experience School Survey.

To avoid any possibility of misconduct, schools are encouraged to review the [Survey Ethics Reference Guide](#), available at NYCSchoolSurvey.org, prior to survey administration.

Follow Up

All of the schools with high parent and guardian response rates unanimously agreed that a key part of their strategy was personalized and persistent follow up.

Frank Sinatra School of the Arts High School (30Q501) reached out to families weekly and then more frequently as the survey's close date approached using PupilPath Scheduler. One helpful tip from the principal was to include the completion rate data and an embedded survey link within encouraging follow-up emails to show parents and guardians that they are a part of a group effort and that they themselves are integral in helping their school reach its goal.