

Snapshots

RESEARCH REPORT

Make Student Feedback Work

The benefits of student feedback are deep and wide—but not always recognized



Students have a comprehensive view of how their teachers educate and motivate. Student evaluations can be collected cheaply, quickly, and regularly, giving teachers opportunities to make real-time adjustments to their teaching. Teachers may actually learn about their students from feedback questionnaires, too—how they learn, whom they know well in the class, and with whom they work best.

Students benefit from this process as well. When schools create a culture of feedback, they “send a strong signal to students that they care about their point of view, while also creating opportunities to model how to productively receive and respond to feedback,” according to educational

researcher Carly Robinson, a Ph.D. student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Research and insights from Robinson and educational psychologist Hunter Gehlbach of the University of California, Santa Barbara, show how schools can get the most out of student feedback, and how principals can help teachers get on board with using it, creating a more communicative school culture for all.

Getting Started

One very real caveat to using student feedback in schools is that students aren’t automatically fair evaluators. A hyper fourth-grader or a sullen adolescent won’t always be particularly just or perceptive. However, with the right scaffolding, most students can be more helpful than many educators assume.

Gehlbach offers advice for teachers on how to solicit meaningful feedback:

- Before administering any surveys, express to students that you as a teacher will improve only from their honest answers. Relay very directly that this feedback is important to you.

- After collecting answers, share some of the findings with the class, letting them know how you are thinking about using this data to improve. “This process builds a lot of trust between teachers and students,” says Gehlbach.
- Frequent, quick, informal questionnaires—“exit tickets”—can get students accustomed to providing feedback, and they may be easier for students to complete than longer surveys.

Strategies for School Leaders: Creating a Culture of Feedback

Principals may want to use the findings from this study literally, or they can extrapolate broader lessons, explain Gehlbach and Robinson.

- If school leaders are trying to gauge how their teachers feel about student feedback, it may be helpful to actually administer a survey that leads with questions about their opinions on teachers evaluating administrators. Says Robinson, “Our findings suggest that this sequencing of questions will

MYTWOCENTS

How can schools work to connect home and school to encourage English-language development at home with families?



MOLLY FUNK (@mollyfunk): We should be communicating in the most comfortable language for the families AND providing supports for the adults in English development and understanding of American school.



EDWARD ORTEGA (@edwardortega007): By embracing families’ culture. Cultural nights are a great way to connect families with schools.

Fast Fact: “In the first three years, a child’s brain has up to twice as many synapses as it will have in adulthood.” — *The Urban Child Institute*

Student Homelessness in Urban, Suburban, Town, and Rural Districts

make teachers feel more positive toward the possibility of using student perception surveys.”

- On the other hand, it may be enough to simply facilitate a discussion during a staff meeting about the value of teacher feedback for administrators, before transitioning into a discussion about the value of student feedback for teachers.
- More generally, principals can simply lead by example by frequently soliciting feedback from their teachers. “This action sends a clear signal that administrators, too, are excited to use feedback to learn and improve,” says Gehlbach. This “culture of feedback” demonstrates to teachers and students alike that their opinions matter, and that trial and error and taking advice are “all part of a healthy improvement process for everyone.”

Adapted from Usable Knowledge at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Learn more at www.gse.harvard.edu/uk.

In recent reports from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), data show that student homelessness is a challenge in many different types of communities. Identifying homeless students can help schools provide better resources in order to enhance students’ overall achievement.

Data

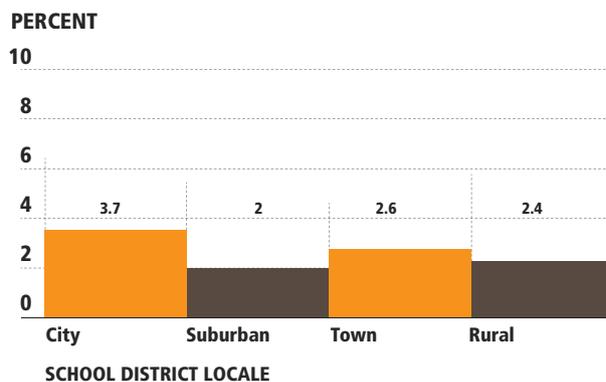
In 2014–2015, the rate of homelessness among U.S. public school students was the highest in city school districts at 3.7 percent, but was also 2.0 percent or higher in suburban, town, and rural districts.

While suburban districts had the lowest rate of student homelessness,

they still enrolled 422,000 homeless students, second only to the 578,000 homeless students enrolled in city districts. Smaller numbers of homeless students were enrolled in rural (149,000) and town (139,000) districts.

The majority of students experiencing homelessness (76 percent) were doubled up or sharing housing with other families due to loss of their own housing or other varied reasons. The percentage of homeless students who were doubled up with other families ranged from 70 percent in city districts to 81 percent in rural districts.

For more information and to view the full reports, visit nces.ed.gov.



Percentage of public school students who were identified as homeless, by school district locale: School year 2014–2015.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics



LESLIE KAPUCHUCK (@LeslieKapuchuck): Stop expecting them to come to us! Go on home visits, get to know them as families, build relationships before making it about academics.



MAY FERMIN CANNON (@MayreniFermin): Remind parents to continue supporting L1 while learning English. Sometimes parents are told to only #SpeakEnglish at home. That’s so wrong. We don’t want students to lose their culture and heritage.

What strategies have you used to support EL learning? Share your thoughts on Twitter using #NAESPChat.