

TIPS FOR CREATING A PARENTLINK SURVEY

Define your objective

As the old saying goes, “If you don’t know where you’re going, how will you get there?” When creating your survey, be clear about your objectives. What are you trying to learn? What data will validate whether or not you have achieved your goals? You have to work backwards and envision what results you want the survey to yield. Don’t forget that other administrators and staff will be interested in your survey results, so consider what metrics would be important and valuable to them. It is also critical to understand the objectives of others who will be reviewing the results, so create questions that are pertinent.

Communicate ahead of time

Alert everyone that the survey is coming. Have administrators communicate with their parents, students, or staff; explain the value and importance of the survey; and encourage their participation. To ensure participation, your questions must be of interest and concern to the participants. Your response rate is influenced greatly by how relevant the survey is to your participants.

Picking the right time to send the survey can have just as much impact as the questions you ask. Avoid nights and times when popular television shows are airing (e.g., *Dancing with the Stars*, *American Idol*, etc.). Consider sending your survey on a Saturday morning between 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. when parents are more likely to be home. Select a good time for the survey to minimize the number of call-backs that may be required. If you send a survey out on a weeknight, our research has shown that you will have a greater response between 4:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. rather than daytime hours (9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.).



Include instructions with your survey

What may seem obvious to you might not be to someone else. To improve the quality of your survey results, include a short introductory set of instructions at the beginning of the survey with additional directions for specific questions as needed. State why you are collecting the information, how the survey will benefit them, and reassure each participant that the information is anonymous.

For example, your instructions may say:

“This survey will help us design a communication plan that fits your needs. Please listen to each question thoroughly and answer to the best of your ability.”

You may also wish to specify the number of questions and/or how long the survey should take to complete.

Specific instructions with each question may be: *“Please check the top three communication opportunities that you rate as your highest priorities.”*

Keep questions short and clear

Each question should be clearly stated so there is no misunderstanding about what is being asked. People will have to take the time to listen to your survey, so make sure that it is clear, concise, and easy to follow. Keep it short and sweet. Ask the easy questions first. Give respondents time to get involved