C2

ADMINISTERING QUESTIONNAIRES

Purpose	The purpose of this activity is to guide staff members in setting up the administration of questionnaires.
Target Audience	School staff are the target audience. However, a Leadership Team or Data Team can make the plans and take them back to the full staff for approval and implementation.
Time	Approximately two hours.
Materials	Computer and projector.

Overview

The most efficient and effective method of administering questionnaires is online through an Internet server. With online questionnaires, respondents visit a website that uses form submission web pages that funnel response data to a database or other container for data housed on a server. With online questionnaires, the data collection process is streamlined for a variety of reasons:

Figure C2-1

DETERMINE PURPOSE:
What do you want to learn? How do you want to use the results in conjunction with your school improvement plan?

DETERMINE CONTENT:
What content is desired and from whom?

DEVELOP INSTRUMENT AND PILOT:
Create instrument, pilot, and revise as necessary. Is the questionnaire working the way you want it to work?

COLLECT THE DATA:
How will the questionnaire be administered and when?

- Paper is eliminated, as are the administrative oversight and other costs associated with the use of paper.
- Most schools and districts already have the hardware and software necessary to administer online questionnaires.
- A district can administer questionnaires and monitor the entire process for all of its schools from a single location.
- Administrative oversight is minimal. Communication can take place through e-mail.
- Duplication of effort is minimized. Files set up for administering questionnaires can be used as templates for data collection and analysis, requiring minimal setup time especially when used with multiple schools.
- The costs associated with administering questionnaires depend less on the number of responses, as opposed to using scannable forms, hand-entry, or online methods. Receiving 50 or 500 responses online does not significantly impact time spent in analysis.
- Responses are converted to numeric data at the same time that they are submitted to the server. Results can be turned around as soon as the last respondent completes her/his submission.
- Questionnaires are administered within a controlled environment, such as a computer lab, to ensure that responses are valid.
- Checking the reliability of submissions is streamlined as responses are collected within a structured database environment. The responses are visually easy to check.
- Open-ended responses are collected in the server database and are easily exported to text documents. With paper, you must type each open-ended response to analyze and report the results.
- The technology and files used for online questionnaire administration can be retasked and used for other data collection projects.
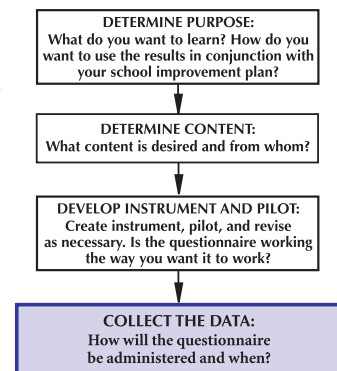
Process Protocol

Steps in Setting Up a Data Collection Process

Step 1. **Communicate the purpose, procedures, and content to stakeholders well in advance.** In order for any data work to be successful, the purpose, procedures, and content must be clearly communicated to stakeholders well before data collection begins. Anticipating and answering all of the what, why, when, where, and how questions will go a long way toward helping you obtain a high response rate with honest responses.

When collecting data online, the easiest way to communicate about your questionnaire project is to set up a demonstration site on your server. The demonstration site can consist of a general information page that contains links to demo versions of each of the questionnaires that you will be administering. The general information page can contain information to satisfy the why and when, and the links to demonstration questionnaires can help satisfy the what, where, and how questions. The demonstration sites allow staff members to experience the online method to decrease anxiety about the use of technology, to review the content for each of the questionnaires that will be administered, and to visualize how the respondent groups will submit their responses.

Step 2. **Select the best time to administer questionnaires.** There is really no "best" time of year to administer questionnaires (when administering questionnaires that truly measure environmental perceptions). Significant differences are rarely seen in student and parent perception data that are collected in the Fall versus the Spring. It is more important that questionnaires be administered at generally the same time each year, every year.

If you choose to administer your questionnaires in the Fall, allow enough of the school calendar to pass so that respondents will have adequate experience with the school to inform their responses. If the school year starts in late August, you should not administer your questionnaires before mid October. If you choose to administer your questionnaires in the Spring, be careful not to overwhelm respondents during a time that is heavy with testing.

A key consideration in scheduling your parent questionnaire administration is determining when you are most likely to have parents onsite in large enough numbers that collecting their responses online becomes a viable option. For elementary schools, Fall parent-teacher conferences provide a great opportunity to collect parent responses because these conferences are usually the most highly attended parent-onsite activity of the year. We like to put the students in charge of ushering parents to the computer lab, getting them comfortable with the questionnaire process, and then escorting the parents to their conferences when finished with the questionnaire. For middle or high schools, parent-teacher conferences, curriculum nights, or even athletic/music/drama events might be considered as times to collect parent responses if the opportunity is well publicized.

Step 3. **Select the environment for administration.** A carefully selected environment for completing questionnaires can help facilitate a good return, honest responses, and can also provide facilitators to provide administrative oversight and assistance.

Staff members can submit their responses in a computer lab setting during a staff meeting; in short order, you have a 100% response rate. An e-mail link can be used for convenience, but then you won't know who did not respond and cannot follow-up with individuals to give them the opportunity to respond. Students and parents can submit their responses in a computer lab as well where large numbers can respond simultaneously, and facilitators can provide oversight and assistance as needed.

Process Protocol *(Continued)*

Schedule staff questionnaire administration first. In submitting their responses, staff members will become familiar with the process of submitting responses and will be better able to organize and lead students through the process. When students submit their responses, they become equally familiar, and they are then available to help parents with the technology and language. If using scannable forms for parents, students are more likely to take parent questionnaires home and return the completed forms to staff in a timely manner after they have completed their own online submissions.

Step 4. Establish a manageable schedule for administration. With the impact of administration order in mind, use the school calendar to identify a target date for parents (during conferences); schedule students at least a week before parent conferences and staff at least a week before the student administration.

For school districts facilitating questionnaires for a large number of schools, the timeline for data collection should depend largely upon the amount of oversight and troubleshooting that can be provided by those facilitating data collection. Scheduling questionnaires for every school in a large district for the same week could seriously impact the ability to provide schools with needed oversight and assistance. If facilitators at the district level can effectively communicate with only five schools per week about their student questionnaires, and there are 20 schools in the district, schedule the administration of student questionnaires over a four-week period. Figure C2-2 on the next page is a sample questionnaire administration planning sheet.

Step 5. Provide a narrow window of administration for each questionnaire. Selecting a narrow window of administration will help focus your administrative and support efforts and allow you to respond to low response rates or other issues quickly. Opening questionnaire administration to a broad timeline usually decreases the ability to identify exactly who has responded and how to provide additional access or resources.

The window for administration depends largely upon the respondent pool. For students responding online, for instance, it is realistic to allocate a week for the collection of submissions, even at the high school level. Staff and parents may be isolated to a specific event, such as a staff meeting or a parent-teacher conference.

Step 6. Provide additional language access. Providing access to questionnaires in multiple languages can be facilitated online by providing respondents with the opportunity to select from a variety of pages that contain the same questionnaire in different languages. Each questionnaire page can be submitted to the same database or another resource on the server where the responses are converted to numeric data. For scannable forms, multiple versions of the same form can be produced for each language and, when scanned, can be combined into a single data file for analysis.

Producing the translated content should not be taken lightly. If care and consideration are not taken to acknowledge the colloquial or regional use of the language, the result may be that the process is more exclusive than inclusive.

A larger issue than translation can be access to the technology for data collection for second language groups. Respondents who require assistance with language may be more likely to require assistance in using the technology to submit their responses. A solution is to ask students or staffs who are able to address both the language and technology issues to facilitate questionnaires for respondents.

Figure C2-2
QUESTIONNAIRE INFORMATION PROJECT PLANNING AND TRACKING FORM

District Name | Kelly River County School District

Contact Information | Jane Smith (CONTACT NAME) | jsmith@krcsd.org (CONTACT E-MAIL) | 555-555-5555 (CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER)

ELEMENTARY

School	Grades	STUDENTS (3-point Q)				STUDENTS (5-point Q)				STAFF				PARENTS			
		Desired Ns	Date(s)	Online	Paper	Desired Ns	Date(s)	Online	Paper	Desired Ns	Date(s)	Online	Paper	Desired Ns	Date(s)	Online	Paper
Belle Aire	1st – 5th	95	10/20 – 10/24	x		78	10/20 – 10/24	x		30	10/20 – 10/24	x		175	10/24 – 10/28	x	
Cherry Hill	1st – 5th	470	11/3 – 11/7	x		325	11/3 – 11/7	x		72	10/20 – 10/24	x		600	10/24 – 10/28	x	
Eastside	1st – 5th	70	10/27 – 10/31	x		75	10/27 – 10/31	x		28	10/20 – 10/24	x		120	10/24 – 10/28	x	
Rose Avenue	1st – 5th	650	11/3 – 11/7	x			11/3 – 11/7	x		20	10/20 – 10/24	x		780	11/24 – 10/28	x	
Sunnyside	K	680	11/3 – 11/14	x		500	11/3 – 11/14	x		60	10/20 – 10/24	x		795	10/24 – 10/28	x	

MIDDLE

School	Grades	STUDENTS (3-point Q)				STUDENTS (5-point Q)				STAFF				PARENTS			
		Desired Ns	Date(s)	Online	Paper	Desired Ns	Date(s)	Online	Paper	Desired Ns	Date(s)	Online	Paper	Desired Ns	Date(s)	Online	Paper
Eastside Middle	6th – 8th	N/A				1,322	10/20 – 10/24	x		54	10/20 – 10/24	x		1,300	10/20 – 10/24	x	
Kelly River Middle	6th – 8th	N/A				1,600	10/20 – 10/24	x		74	10/20 – 10/24	x		1,500	10/20 – 10/24	x	
King Middle	6th – 8th	N/A				1,749	10/20 – 10/24	x		78	10/20 – 10/24	x		1,600	10/20 – 10/24	x	

HIGH

School	Grades	STUDENTS (3-point Q)				STUDENTS (5-point Q)				STAFF				PARENTS			
		Desired Ns	Date(s)	Online	Paper	Desired Ns	Date(s)	Online	Paper	Desired Ns	Date(s)	Online	Paper	Desired Ns	Date(s)	Online	Paper
Eastside High	9th – 12th	N/A				1,822	10/20 – 10/24	x		68	10/24 – 10/24	x	600	1,524	10/20 – 10/28	x	
Kelly River High	9th – 12th	N/A				1,907	10/20 – 10/24 if needed 11/5 and 11/6	x		74	10/24 – 10/24	x	600	1,642	10/20 – 10/28 if needed 11/5 and 11/6	x	

Process Protocol *(Continued)*

Step 7. Test the data collection tools prior to administration. A critical part of effectively collecting questionnaire data involves thoroughly testing the tools to be used before releasing them to respondents. For collecting data online, testing involves submitting responses to each of the questionnaire sites. If using scannable forms, pull forms from various points within the print run, fill them out, and run them through the OMR scanner to make sure data are recorded accurately. Any work associated with the testing that is completed before actually collecting data will pale in comparison to the efforts required if you experience problems with online data submission or form scanning.

Step 8. Verify the data. In verifying the data, consider the number of people who were given the questionnaire and the number of responses received. If the number of responses is low, follow-up with those who received the questionnaire originally to get more responses. If your parent questionnaire was given at parent–teacher conferences and only 60% of your parents attended (identified through a guest book or sign-in sheets in each classroom), you could use another format to get additional responses from the parents who did not attend. Only with in person administration procedures can you know exactly who responded to an anonymous questionnaire. You could send scannable questionnaires to those who did not attend. Figure C2-3 shows Figure C2-2 completed to document response numbers to ensure the best possible sample.

For each of the approaches to gathering questionnaire data, you will need to verify the accuracy of the data collection. For online data collection, remove any duplicates, tests, or otherwise errant responses from your sample. For scannable forms, recheck the reliability of your scanning process by checking responses from a few of the scannable forms against the data file produced by the scanner.

Figure C2-3
QUESTIONNAIRE INFORMATION RESPONSE DETAIL REPORT

District Name	Kelly River County School District
Date	Fall 2008

ELEMENTARY

	STUDENTS (3-point Q)				STAFF				PARENTS			
	Desired Ns	10/26	11/3	11/10	Desired Ns	10/27	11/3	11/10	Desired Ns	10/27	11/3	11/10
Belle Aire Elementary	95	0	22	89	30	8	10	28	175	13	136	166
Cherry Hill Elementary	470	90	186	470	72	24	24	68	600	19	311	541
Eastside Elementary	70	0	0	70	28	9	9	24	120	0	92	120
Rose Avenue Elementary	650	209	209	647	20	6	6	18	780	95	480	698
Sunnyside Elementary	680	222	429	678	60	20	28	58	795	140	621	744

MIDDLE

	STUDENTS (3-point Q)	STUDENTS (5-point Q)				STAFF				PARENTS			
		Desired Ns	10/27	11/3	11/10	Desired Ns	10/27	11/3	11/10	Desired Ns	10/27	11/3	11/10
Eastside Middle	N/A	1,322	704	1,122	1,309	54	0	36	54	1,300	0	894	1,196
Kelly River Middle	N/A	1,600	509	509	509	74	32	64	74	1,500	0	246	1,403
King Middle	N/A	1,749	609	1,376	1,739	78	0	58	78	1,600	0	1,146	1,688

HIGH

	STUDENTS (3-point Q)	STUDENTS (5-point Q)				STAFF				PARENTS			
		Desired Ns	10/27	11/3	11/10	Desired Ns	10/27	11/3	11/10	Desired Ns	10/27	11/3	11/10
Eastside High	N/A	1,822	0	1,493	1,819	68	0	29	68	1,524	0	495	1,516
Kelly River High	N/A	1,907	391	1,249	1,859	74	34	68	74	1,642	33	1,249	1,608

Note: Numbers above do not account for test or duplicate submissions to be removed prior to analysis.

Comments to the Facilitator

A secure environment for collecting questionnaire data online can be achieved either through technology or by setting up an effective process.

With technology, we can build elaborate systems to validate users with checks such as unique user names and passwords. This technology requires a greater degree of knowledge and experience with technology, and it often results in the transition from a static (simple) data model to a dynamic (complex) model.

In designing an effective process for collecting responses, however, we can achieve a comparable level of security. A few guiding ideas can help facilitate a secure process:

◆ Set up data collection websites for each school, each with its own separate staff, student, and parent questionnaire sites. Respondents can only submit responses for their particular questionnaire for their school. Their responses are more readily trackable on the server.

◆ Provide web addresses for access to each questionnaire for each school, and only just before data collection is to take place. Do not provide links to the questionnaires anywhere on the web. By asking respondents to enter a web address into a browser, you are facilitating a degree of validation without having to oversee the distribution of user names and passwords.

◆ Add auto-entering date and time fields to your data collection databases so you can track exactly when submissions were received. Any responses received outside of the agreed administration time period may be suspect.

◆ For students and parents, administer questionnaires within a computer lab or other environment where participation can be supervised and support provided as needed. Set the time frame so it is difficult, or impossible, for someone to submit more than one form.

In the end, simple form submission to a database provides us with the greatest amount of security as databases used for collection (hence the raw data) need not be broadcast directly to the web.

As with other data projects, all data collected must be validated prior to analysis regardless of the safeguards in place prior to collection. The databases used on the server provide a great environment for reviewing and validating our data, which ultimately reduces the need to put technology in place to secure data collection. In the end, a secure process will help us more than focusing on technological solutions that may add complex layers to the work.

Reference: Excerpts taken from from V.L. Bernhardt & B.J. Geise (2009). *Questions to Actions: Using Questionnaire Data for Continuous School Improvement.* Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education, Inc.