

## Survey Tips (adapted from Beyond the Bell)

- Make the questions short and clear.
- Use direct and simple questions. Address one issue per question. For example, “Did the staff work well with your child?”
- Tailor the survey to the audience you are reaching. For example, use simple language for young students. Avoid use of jargon.
- Keep questions positive. For example, “Are there areas where the program could be improved?”
- Avoid bias. You do not want to lead the participant.
- Give exact instructions to the respondent on how to record answers. For example, in multiple-choice cases, explain exactly how and where to write the answer (e.g., check a box, circle a number).
- Provide response alternatives. For example, include the response “other” for answers that do not fit elsewhere.
- Make the questionnaire attractive. Plan its format carefully, using subheadings and spaces.
- Test your survey with a few people before administering it to a large group. Ask your test audience for feedback on the clarity of the questions, the length of time needed to complete the survey, and any specific problems they encountered while completing the survey.
- Try to limit survey length to two pages. An unusually long questionnaire may discourage respondents.
- Discuss the best method of survey collection to maximize the survey return rate.
  - Community partners may respond best to an electronic survey. Your district technology department may be able to assist you in setting up the survey online. Or, email the survey to recipients and allow them to complete the survey and email it back. Give them the option to mail a hard copy, as well.
  - Parents may also wish to receive surveys electronically. Another option is to collect the surveys when parents come to pick students up or at family events.
  - Younger students may not be able to read and write responses to survey questions. You may consider having your evaluator administer the survey orally or assist the students in reading the survey questions.
  - If you decide to mail surveys to families via US Postal Service, provide a self-addressed stamped envelope for return.
  - When collecting teacher surveys, have your school administrator assist. The administrator may provide teachers time to complete the survey at a staff meeting. Also, if your administrator is supportive the process, you may be more likely to get a good return rate.
  - When collecting teacher surveys, try to avoid busy times of the year. For example, avoid the beginning of the semester, parent-teacher conference weeks or assessment periods.