EAB

SURVEY TEMPLATE AND GUIDE

Parent Feedback Survey Resource: A Guide to Surface and Address Today's Parents' Questions and Concerns

Independent School Executive Forum

Independent School Executive Forum

Director, K-12 Research

Sharon Rosenfeld

Senior Director, K-12 Research

Meredith McNeill

Legal Caveat

EAB Global, Inc. ("EAB") has made efforts to verify the accuracy of the information it provides to partners. This report relies on data obtained from many sources, however, and EAB cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided or any analysis based thereon. In addition, neither EAB nor any of its affiliates (each, an "EAB Organization") is in the business of giving legal, accounting, or other professional advice, and its reports should not be construed as professional advice. In particular, partners should not rely on any legal commentary in this report as a basis for action, or assume that any tactics described herein would be permitted by applicable law or appropriate for a given partner's situation. Partners are advised to consult with appropriate professionals concerning legal, tax, or accounting issues, before implementing any of these tactics. No EAB Organization or any of its respective officers, directors, employees, or agents shall be liable for any claims, liabilities, or expenses relating to (a) any errors or omissions in this report, whether caused by any EAB Organization, or any of their respective employees or agents, or sources or other third parties, (b) any recommendation by any EAB Organization, or (c) failure of partner and its employees and agents to abide by the terms set forth herein.

EAB is a registered trademark of EAB Global, Inc. in the United States and other countries. Partners are not permitted to use these trademarks, or any other trademark, product name, service name, trade name, and logo of any EAB Organization without prior written consent of EAB. Other trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos used within these pages are the property of their respective holders. Use of other company trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos or images of the same does not necessarily constitute (a) an endorsement by such company of an EAB Organization and its products and services, or (b) an endorsement of the company or its products or services by an EAB Organization. No EAB Organization is affiliated with any such company.

IMPORTANT: Please read the following.

EAB has prepared this report for the exclusive use of its partners. Each partner acknowledges and agrees that this report and the information contained herein (collectively, the "Report") are confidential and proprietary to EAB. By accepting delivery of this Report, each partner agrees to abide by the terms as stated herein, including the following:

1. All right, title, and interest in and to this Report is owned by an EAB Organization. Except as stated herein, no right, license, permission, or interest of any kind in this Report is intended to be given, transferred to, or acquired by a partner. Each partner is authorized to use this Report only to the extent expressly authorized herein.

2. Each partner shall not sell, license, republish, distribute, or post online or otherwise this Report, in part or in whole. Each partner shall not disseminate or permit the use of, and shall take reasonable precautions to prevent such dissemination or use of, this Report by (a) any of its employees and agents (except as stated below), or (b) any third party.

3. Each partner may make this Report available solely to those of its employees and agents who (a) are registered for the workshop or program of which this Report is a part, (b) require access to this Report in order to learn from the information described herein, and (c) agree not to disclose this Report to other employees or agents or any third party. Each partner shall use, and shall ensure that its employees and agents use, this Report for its internal use only. Each partner may make a limited number of copies, solely as adequate for use by its employees and agents in accordance with the terms herein.

4. Each partner shall not remove from this Report any confidential markings, copyright notices, and/or other similar indicia herein.

5. Each partner is responsible for any breach of its obligations as stated herein by any of its employees or agents.

6. If a partner is unwilling to abide by any of the foregoing obligations, then such partner shall promptly return this Report and all copies thereof to EAB.

Table of Contents

Introduction. 4

Parent Feedback Surveys. 6

Case Study: The Pingry School's Parent Survey. 7

EAB Survey Template. 9

©2022 by EAB. All Rights Reserved.

A Look at Today's Anxious Parents

"There has been **a rising tide of anxiety** and consumerism among parents…And we have also seen **a lot of new reasons that people are anxious—they're less able to control their child's future."**

Psychologist and School Consultant

In our research on today's independent school parents, heads of school perceived parents to be more anxious than ever, with two-thirds agreeing that parent anxiety has increased.[1] Indeed, today's Generation X and Millennial parents are concerned about many aspects of their children's futures and seek to be in control as much as possible given the uncertainty of today's world.

Independent schools are seeing parent anxiety manifest in several ways. First, parents seek to be involved or have control over many aspects of their children's learning and development at school. This can be seen as parents asking more questions about what is being taught in the curriculum or worrying that their children aren't taking the "right" courses to get into college. Next, parents may seek certain outcomes for their children, as they worry about their trajectories if they do not receive top grades or become star athletes. In some cases, parents' anxieties lead to more extreme behaviors, like demanding changes to transcripts or challenging athletic coaches' decisions. When not proactively addressed by the school, minor issues can escalate quickly into bigger concerns that must be addressed by school administrators.

Unfortunately, our research indicates that most independent schools' current approach to parents leads to certain shortcomings when it comes to addressing parent issues early.

1) N= 43 heads of partner schools

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

©2022 by EAB. All Rights Reserved.

A New Approach to Parent Concerns

Current Approach Leads to Shortcomings in Relationships with the Majority of Parents

Most independent schools passively wait for parent concerns to surface, which often means that issues are brought up immediately only by those vocal "5 percenters"—parents who are quick to express their unhappiness and often difficult to please. The parent majority, on the other hand, is often too busy or not sufficiently engaged to do so.

As a result, administrators miss the chance to nip their issues in the bud, allowing them to become full-blown problems by the time they're addressed, which risks creating unproductive partnerships[1].

Schools Wait for Parent Concerns to Surface...

- Parent issues voiced early only by most vocal
- Majority too busy or not sufficiently engaged to surface issues right away

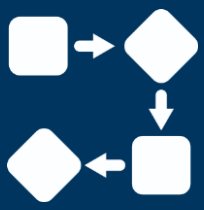
...Allowing Problems to Escalate

- Administrators miss chance to promptly address minor matters
- Escalated issues risk contributing to unproductive partnerships

Rather than focusing primarily on the needs of the vocal parents who raise their hands, **take the temperature of ALL parents to surface issues early**, before they have the chance to escalate.

Assess Parent Concerns Through Surveys

While many independent schools send out surveys periodically related to specific subjects or events where they are seeking parent input, regularly soliciting feedback from parents on their everyday experience with the school is not a common practice. As straightforward as it may seem, using **quick and easy online surveys** provides a methodical way of gathering parent feedback and serves to demonstrate your commitment to meeting the needs of your parents as valued partners within the school community.



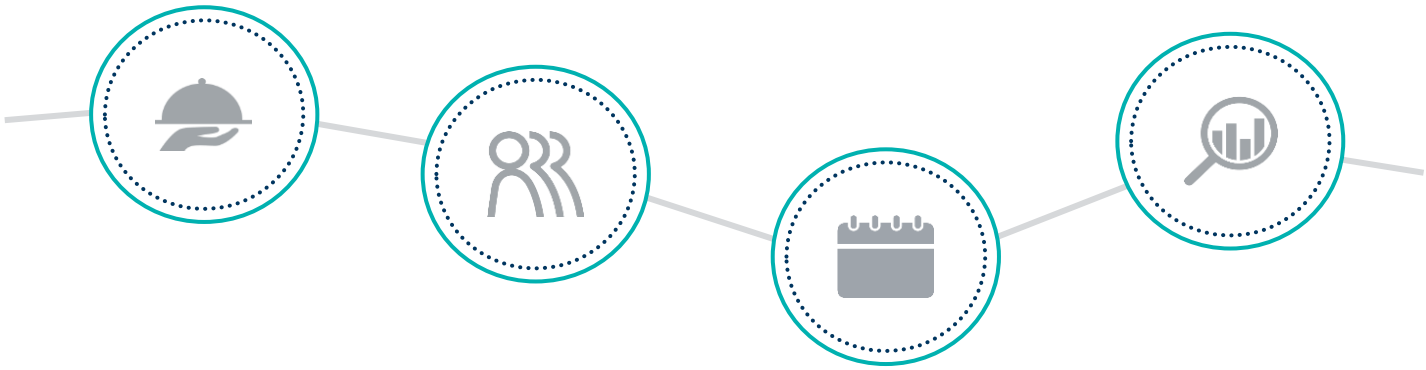
In the next section, we introduce the **four key elements of designing, implementing, and assessing parent feedback surveys** at your school.

1) Defined in our research as parent relationships characterized by grievances and dissatisfaction with the school, in spite of the school's best efforts.

©2022 by EAB. All Rights Reserved.

Parent Feedback Surveys: The Four Key Elements

EAB recommends integrating four key elements into parent feedback survey design and implementation, as outlined below.



1

A Light Lift for Parents

First, make giving feedback easy to do.

- Design the survey to be quick and simple to complete (ideally 5-10 questions) so that even the busiest of parents can respond.
- Email the survey **directly to parents' inboxes**, rather than directing them to an online portal or secondary site.

2

All Parents Surveyed

Second, include everybody.

- Send the survey to **all** parents in the school community to be sure that not just the most vocal parents raise issues that get attention.
- Give parents the option to include their names so that you can respond to them personally, as needed.
- Determine whether you want the same survey to be sent to all parents or whether you want to alter it by division. (Note that the latter option requires more effort by parents with multiple children enrolled at your school.)

3

Timely Deployment

Third, make it timely.

- Solicit feedback consistently. We recommend **once a quarter** to keep the survey regular without risking it becoming an email that is too frequent and gets ignored in inboxes.
- Deploy additional surveys **as needed** to gauge parents' feelings on controversies or crises when they arise at your institution.

4

Results Utilized Intentionally

Finally, strategically assess and respond to results.

- Have the leadership team review results and prioritize how best to respond to individual issues.
- **Look for larger trends** in the feedback that can be addressed through parent education or formal communication to calm bigger sources of anxiety within the community.
- Periodically share survey results at a high-level with parents to show how the school is responding to their feedback. **Highlight positive comments** as well.

©2022 by EAB. All Rights Reserved.

Case Study: The Pingry School's Parent Survey

An excellent example of a school using surveys to monitor parent feedback comes from The Pingry School, a co-ed K-12 school in Basking Ridge, New Jersey.

The Pingry School's Survey Approach

During the pandemic, the school began sending out a 5-question form to gather parent feedback on virtual learning. The survey was sent through the weekly parent newsletter to regularly collect parent input during the early days of the COVID-19 crisis.

Sample questions are provided below.

Sample Questions

1. *On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied are you with your child's OVERALL EXPERIENCE at Pingry Anywhere?*

Very dissatisfied	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5	Very Satisfied

2. *Additional comments about your satisfaction with your child's OVERALL EXPERIENCE:*_____

3. *As best you can, respond to the following: My child is engaged.*

Strongly Disagree	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5	Strongly Agree

4. *As best you can, respond to the following: My child is able to foster relationships with teachers.*

Strongly Disagree	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5	Strongly Agree

5. *As best you can, respond to the following: My child able to navigate Google Classroom (including accessing links, coursework, assignments, etc.)*

Strongly Disagree	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5	Strongly Agree

Short and to the point, the survey was used to take a quick temperature check of how parents and their children were feeling about the Pingry virtual experience.

Pingry sent out separate surveys created for lower, and middle and upper school families. The survey for lower school parents was a bit longer and covered a wider range of topics, since it was geared toward parents who were more involved with their children's day-to-day schooling. All parents were given the option to complete it anonymously or provide their names, which was particularly useful if the school needed to respond to a parent concern.

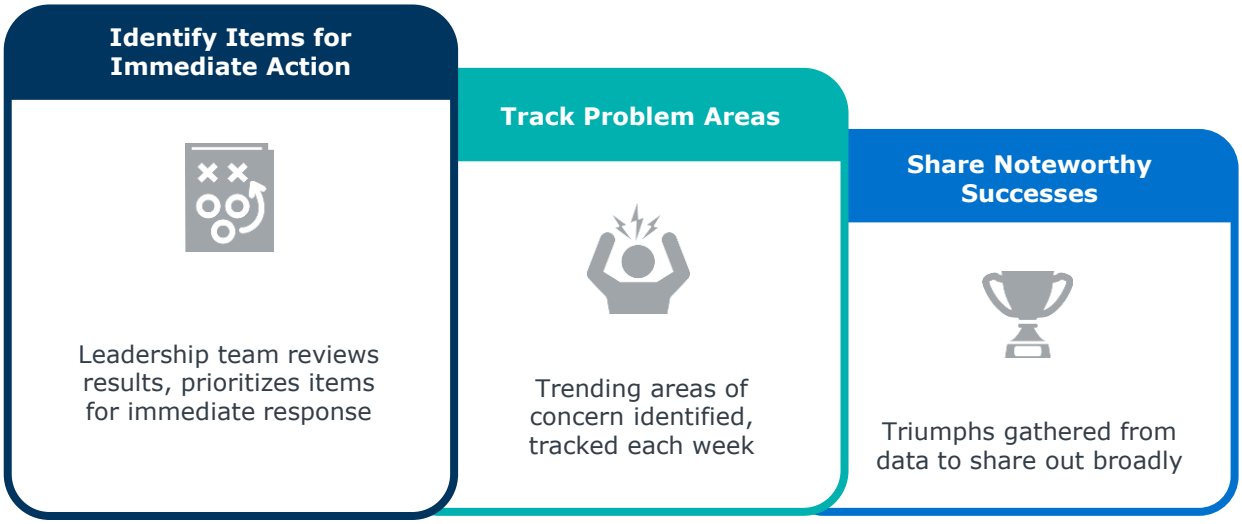
©2022 by EAB. All Rights Reserved.

Case Study: The Pingry School's Parent Survey (cont.)

Assessment of Survey Results

Pingry prioritized having the school leadership team review the survey data each week it was collected. The results were compiled by division and used for three main purposes:

1. First, the team identified areas where they needed to take immediate action based on the feedback's urgency and importance (e.g., a major concern raised by a parent).
2. Second, they noted larger trends and emerging issues to keep an eye on (see example below).
3. Third, they gathered stories of success to share with the broader community.



Identifying and Addressing Parent Concerns

One example of a high-priority item that emerged from the survey was the fact that many students were feeling the toll of the pandemic on their mental health and stress levels. The leadership team identified a trend in parent responses about students missing out on the social element of school, even when they were back on campus. After several weeks of this feedback, the school began incorporating what they called "moments of joy" into the student experience, such as food trucks or ice cream socials on campus. These events also had the added benefit of giving school counselors the chance for increased interaction with students.

Over time, the school was able to see how the "moments of joy" initiative contributed to boosting attendance among students in the upper school, who began to come in more often by choice to engage with peers. Not only was Pingry better able to support its students, but this anecdote shows how asking for parent feedback enabled the school to listen to its customers and directly respond to concerns before they escalated further.

©2022 by EAB. All Rights Reserved.

EAB Parent Feedback Survey Template

To help our partners collect feedback from their own parent communities, we created a survey template to work from. The questions below can be used as is or modified to suit your needs at your institution.

Your Name (optional):_____

1. *On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied are you with your child/ren's current experience at <School Name>?*

Very Dissatisfied	◯ 1	◯ 2	◯ 3	◯ 4	◯ 5	Very Satisfied

2. *Please provide additional comments about your response to the question above.*

3. *The school is responsive to my child/ren's individual needs.*

Strongly Disagree	◯ 1	◯ 2	◯ 3	◯ 4	◯ 5	Strongly Agree

4. *Please provide additional comments about your agreement with the statement above.*

5. *I am confident in the school's ability to support the learning and development of my child/ren.*

Strongly Disagree	◯ 1	◯ 2	◯ 3	◯ 4	◯ 5	Strongly Agree

6. *I Please provide additional comments about your agreement with the statement above.*

7. *I would like the school to provide me with more information about:*

©2022 by EAB. All Rights Reserved.

EAB Parent Feedback Survey Template (continued)

Utilizing Survey Results

Below, we provide recommendations on how to use the results of your parent feedback.

*Your Name (optional):*_____

1. *On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied are you with your child/ren's current experience at <School Name>?*

Very Dissatisfied	1	2	3	4	5	Very Satisfied
	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	

Follow up with parents who respond with 3 or below to determine how their needs can be met.

2. *Please provide additional comments about your response to the question above.*

3. *The school is responsive to my child/ren's individual needs.*

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	

As with question #1, any responses of 3 or below should be immediately followed up upon.

4. *Please provide additional comments about your agreement with the statement above.*

5. *I am confident in the school's ability to support the learning and development of my child/ren.*

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	

6. *I Please provide additional comments about your agreement with the statement above.*

7. *I would like the school to provide me with more information about:*

Contact parents to answer their questions; address larger trends identified through programming to educate parents.

©2022 by EAB. All Rights Reserved.

Washington DC | Richmond | Birmingham | Minneapolis

202-747-1000 | **eab.com**

@eab **@eab_** **@WeAreEAB** **@eab.life**

ABOUT EAB

At EAB, our mission is to make education smarter and our communities stronger. We work with thousands of institutions to drive transformative change through data-driven insights and best-in-class capabilities. From kindergarten to college to career, EAB partners with leaders and practitioners to accelerate progress and drive results across five major areas: enrollment, student success, institutional strategy, data analytics, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). We work with each partner differently, tailoring our portfolio of research, technology, and marketing and enrollment solutions to meet the unique needs of every leadership team, as well as the students and employees they serve. Learn more at eab.com.