



Sample Questions for Surveys, Focus Groups or Empathy Interviews

General Questions:

- What are two things that this school could do to improve? Please be as specific as possible. (ALL)
- What are two things that this school does well that it should continue to do? Please be as specific as possible. (ALL)
- How can the school help to successfully transition students from middle to high school? (ALL)
- What do you hope that all students know or understand when they graduate from your school? (ALL)
- What are the most positive aspects of working at your school? (STAFF)
- If you could change anything about working at your school, what would you change? (STAFF)
- Why do you personally do this work? (STAFF)
- What interventions/teams/supports do you think need to be in place to support students? (STAFF)
- What are the biggest issues that you feel are facing the school right now? (ALL)

Culture and Climate Questions:

- What 1-2 steps could your school take to improve the social climate of the school for students? (ALL)
- If you were in charge of the school, how would you try to engage more parents from your community? (STAFF/FAMILY)
- If you were principal, what is the one change you would make to the school to make it feel safer? (ALL)
- What is one thing that students could do at school to make it feel safer? (STAFF/STUDENTS)
- What are the most important things your child's school does to create a positive social climate for students? (FAMILY)
- What is the biggest obstacle that prevents you from getting more involved at your child's school? (FAMILY)
- Whose voices do you feel are not being heard in your school community? (ALL)
- What does respect mean to you? Can you share an example that you've seen at your school of someone being respectful? (STUDENTS)
- What strategies and resources are available if you see a student treating someone else with disrespect? (STUDENTS)

Equity and Inclusion:

- What do you wish your teachers knew about your experiences of race, ethnicity, or culture at school? (STUDENTS)
- What is the most important thing your school can keep doing to support students of different races, ethnicities, and cultures? (STUDENTS)



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- Do you think that everyone in the school tries hard to make all types of people feel included? If so, how? If not, what would need to change? (ALL)
 - This year at school, what types of meaningful discussions have been had about difficult topics? Are people open to having these conversations? (STAFF/STUDENTS)

Classroom Engagement

- How do you know when you are feeling engaged in class? (STUDENTS)
- How do you know when students are engaged in your class? (STAFF)
- If you were teaching class, what is the one thing you would do to make it more engaging for all students? (STUDENTS)

Classroom Instruction:

- If this teacher were to change one thing about his/her teaching, what should s/he change? Please be as specific as possible. (STUDENTS)
- If this teacher were to make sure to keep doing one thing about his/her teaching, what should s/he keep doing? Please be as specific as possible. (STUDENTS)
- What do you think is the biggest change this teacher could make to get along better with more of his/her students? (STUDENTS)
- Please list 1-2 things that this teacher could do to improve the classroom overall. (STUDENTS)
- What are the expectations around instruction in this school? (STAFF)
- How do you make sure that instruction is reaching all students? (STAFF)

Mindset:

- What is an example of a time when hard work has really paid off for you? (STUDENTS)
- What goal are you most excited to achieve by the end of this school year? (STUDENTS/STAFF)
- What is the biggest barrier that stands between you and achieving this goal? (STUDENTS/STAFF)
- Please list a concrete strategy that you can use to overcome the barriers to reaching your most important goal? (STUDENTS/STAFF)

Data Contextualized

- Do you think this data reflects the experiences of students at your school? (ALL)
- Which data points seem most relevant? (ALL)
- Can you share more about what these data points look and feel like at your school? (ALL)

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

1. *It is helpful to probe early in the discussion or within the question to underscore the impression that more detailed answers are needed and wanted. Phrases such as “Can you tell me more about that?” or “Do you have an example of when that happened?” can help to bring out more details.*
2. *Give enough time for the survey, interview or focus group. If people feel rushed then they are less likely to share details.*
3. *Embrace silence if this is an interview or focus group. Allowing silence can encourage participation because it gives participants a chance to think about what they want to say. More often than not, participants will fill the silence with more information.*
4. *Refrain from showing your opinion on a topic or response in a focus group or interview. Comments such as “I can’t believe it!” or “You really think that?!” infer your opinion and impose judgment on the participant, which can shut down discussion. Instead, use phrases such as “Thank you for sharing.”*
5. *Continue the relationship with the participants involved. If they have now become more interested in your efforts and would like to get more involved, consider offering them an opportunity to do so.*