

2020 NYC School Survey

How to Increase Family Engagement with the Survey

Schools that successfully engage families in the annual NYC School Survey are located in all five boroughs and serve diverse students and families. One thing these schools have in common is a strong culture of family engagement year-round tailored to the distinct communication styles and needs of their school communities. In this guide, schools share their strategies for promoting participation in the parent/guardian survey.

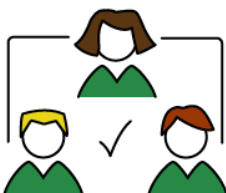
What can you do before survey administration?



Review, Use & Share the Results

Parents want to have a voice in their students' learning, and it is important for them to see how the feedback they provide through the NYC School Survey is used. Schools with strong family engagement are able to highlight their strengths and areas for continuous improvement, and share with parents how they are using results from the NYC School Survey, along with other NYC DOE reports, to inform planning and professional learning opportunities throughout the school year.

Resources: [Data Protocol](#) | [School Quality Guide](#) | [NYC School Quality Snapshot](#)



Build a Team

Recruit members from your school community to help plan survey administration, coordinate events, and reach out to families at your school. Parent volunteers can help make personal phone calls to parents to encourage attendance at events and participation in the survey. Teachers can discuss the importance of the survey with their classes and share with them how feedback from the previous year's surveys is being used. Students can deliver survey materials to their parents and bring them back to school once they are completed. Last, but not least, schools with high parent response rates leverage the expertise of their parent coordinators who are critical partners in building and maintaining strong relationships with students' families.



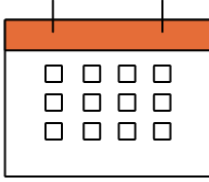
Communicate

Be sure to let parents and guardians know when it's time to take the annual NYC School Survey. Use whatever communication tools work best for your students' families, whether that is a monthly newsletter or a digital learning platform that parents check regularly like PupilPath or Power School. Schools that go above and beyond also meet parents where they are, distributing information and survey materials at afterschool programs, housing developments, and other locations within the school's community.

Resources: [Family Engagement Toolkit](#)

What can you do during survey administration?

Host an Event



Identify when families will be at your school during the survey administration period and make sure the materials they need to complete the survey are available. Many schools use their parent-teacher conferences to administer the survey. A number of creative schools use the theme of the green parent survey envelope to make the events more festive and to “Go Green!” This can mean anything from assigning a “Green Team” to collect surveys to distributing green beads to parents once their surveys are completed. Some schools host additional events throughout the survey administration period like a community breakfast or parent appreciation dinner. Food is always a great way to bring people together!

Resources: [Parent-Teacher Conference Schedule](#) | [NYC School Survey Preferences](#)

Provide Onsite Support



The highest parent response rates are often achieved when parents are able to complete the survey at their child’s school. Whether this is at a parent-teacher conference or during a visit to the school for drop off/pick up, an event, or a meeting, these schools make sure that parents and guardians have the materials and resources they need to complete the survey. Computer labs and libraries are kept open during drop-off and pick-up times, writing tools are available, and translation support is provided through school staff and even students when needed.

Resources: [Translated Surveys](#)

Make it Fun



Schools with high parent response rates often find ways to encourage participation through a variety of small incentives. Some examples are:

- A one day homework pass
- A raffle prize (e.g. MTA cards for parents, small gift certificates, etc.)
- Every class to return 100% of their completed parent surveys gets a pizza party or free entry to an event

Resources: [Survey Ethics Reference Guide](#)

Follow-up



One tip nearly every school with a parent/guardian response rate over 80% has for schools wishing to increase family engagement with the survey at their school is to follow up! The most effective strategies schools found for guaranteeing as many parents/guardians participated in the survey as possible was to track completion and follow up with a personal phone call from the principal or other trusted staff member – for example, the school’s parent coordinator or guidance counselor – and home visits when feasible. Schools also use automated message systems like Phone Masters or RoboCalls.



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Increasing Family Engagement: School Spotlights

Review, Use & Share the Results

At **Staten Island Technical High School (31R605)**, students understand that the NYC School Survey is an opportunity for their families to have a voice in decision making at their school. School leadership makes sure students know how the feedback students and parents/guardians provide through the survey has impacted current initiatives and will drive future planning. Students are then key partners in making sure this information is communicated to parents and guardians.

Prior to survey administration, the student organization puts together a schedule during which student organization members can go to all classes to review the results of the previous year's survey and discuss their importance. After this presentation, every student receives their parent or guardian's copy of the survey to take home.

Students are responsible for sharing the information they learned about the survey with their parents and guardians and then returning the completed surveys to their school. Classes to return 100% of their completed parent and guardian surveys get a pizza party.

At **New York City Charter High School for Architecture, Engineering, and Construction Industries (AECI) (84X395)**, the principal works closely with students, families, and school staff during town hall meetings and grade team meetings to: review the school's annual survey results, brainstorm solutions, and communicate any actions the school will take based on the feedback from the survey.

When the school received a low percent of favorable responses to a question about whether or not teachers notice when students are upset, the principal planned for a social worker to train faculty on how to recognize and appropriately address signs of emotional distress. This feedback cycle allows members of the school community to understand how their participation in the survey directly impacts day-to-day practice.

Build a Team

During the survey planning and administration process at **New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities (84X553)**, the school principal recruits support from her parent coordinator, who is the resident expert in family outreach and engagement. The parent coordinator's strong relationships with students' families help her identify the most appropriate methods for

communicating with parents and guardians about the survey – for example, when a message via WhatsApp will be more effective than an email reminder - and tracking their participation. In addition to the parent coordinator, the principal also relies on parent volunteers to help promote participation in the survey and follow up with parents who have not completed the survey through personal phone calls and direct appeals.

Similar to Staten Island Technical High School, **Flushing International High School (25Q263)** believes that the most effective way to engage families around the survey is through their children. Students learn about the importance of the survey and share this message with their parents and guardians. The school has found that there is a greater likelihood that a parent or guardian will complete the survey if asked to fill it out by their child.

Communicate

At **M.S. 324 - Patria Mirabal (06M324)**, extensive outreach efforts result in exceptionally high engagement with the parent and guardian survey. In addition to sending communications to each family via email and SchoolMessenger encouraging them to take the survey, the school principal also attends Parent Association meetings in order to communicate in-person the importance of the survey in helping the school understand how to better serve students and families.

Similar to other schools, parents and guardians at M.S. 324 also have the option to complete the survey during Parent-Teacher Conferences. Parents and guardians who do not complete the survey prior to or during the Parent-Teacher Conferences receive a personal phone call from the school's Parent Coordinator or a member of the Parent Association to set up a time and date that is convenient for the parent/guardian to come to the school to complete the survey.

To ensure that parents and guardians understand the information they are receiving around the survey, the **Pre-K Center at 7415 Fort Hamilton Parkway (Z073)** translates all of their survey-related communications into every language spoken by their program's families. These communications include: an initial letter to parents, reminders in their monthly newsletter, flyers, and key dates and information posted to the parent board outside each classroom.

Host an Event

Similar to other schools that achieve high parent and guardian response rates in the NYC School Survey, **P.S. 021 Edward Hart (25Q021)** and **Brooklyn Landmark Elementary School (23K599)** leverage planned events, like their annual parent-teacher conferences, to maximize participation among families.

However, what sets P.S. 021 Edward Hart and Brooklyn Landmark Elementary School apart is the spirit with which their teams promote the NYC School Survey at their schools' events. At P.S. 021 Edward Hart, classroom teachers individually distribute the surveys to their students' parents and guardians during their meeting. Tables are set up in the lunchroom for parents/guardians to complete their survey by paper, and computers are also available for parents and guardians who prefer to complete the survey online. Snacks are provided to families as they complete their surveys, and a designated "Green Team" collects all completed surveys at tables decorated with green balloons.

At Brooklyn Landmark Elementary School, parents and guardians have the option to complete their surveys as they wait to meet with their child's teacher. The team at Brooklyn Landmark Elementary School ensures parents and guardians have a comfortable space and the appropriate materials and resources to fill out their survey forms either by paper or online. Similar to P.S. 021 Edward Hart, staff at Brooklyn Landmark Elementary School promote the survey by wearing all green.

Provide Onsite Support

Health Opportunities High School (07X670) distributes the majority of parent and guardian surveys directly to families onsite during regularly planned events, meetings, or other visits to the school. To ensure that parents and guardians can complete the survey accurately, Health Opportunities High School provides parents and guardians with a number of onsite supports. During planned events, the school makes sure to have the materials and resources available for parents and guardians to complete the survey online or by paper. In addition, the school along with other schools with high parent response rates like Flushing International High School, enlists teachers and students to provide translation support.

Make it Fun

A practice common to all the schools with a high parent response rate is that participation in the survey is promoted through various small incentives. Parents/guardians completing their surveys have the opportunity to enter a raffle. In addition, students receive a reward when their parents complete the survey.

At P.S. 021 Edward Hart, each class to reach 100% parent/guardian participation in the survey receives an ice cream treat. At Brooklyn Landmark Elementary School, students whose parents/guardians complete the survey and three other items on their parent-teacher conference to-do list (e.g. visit the science lab to learn more about the upcoming Science Fair) receive a ticket to the Annual Spring Dance.

While many schools have developed strategies for incentivizing participation in the NYC School Survey, similar to other family engagement efforts, the most effective approaches tend to demonstrate a strong knowledge of each school's community and correspond with the particular needs and interests of their students and families. To avoid any possibility of misconduct, schools are encouraged to review the [Survey Ethics Reference Guide](#), available on the [NYC School Survey Info-Hub](#) prior to survey administration.

Follow Up

The Gregory Jocko Jackson School of Sports, Art, and Technology (23K284) has a simple solution for promoting high parent and guardian participation with the NYC School Survey that is replicated by many schools with similarly high parent and guardian response rates: personalized and persistent follow up. If a parent or guardian does not complete their survey at the school's parent-teacher conference, then they receive a direct phone call from the school to arrange a time to come in and complete their survey.

If the school is unable to reach a parent or guardian by phone, then they visit the family's home to deliver the survey in-person. Other schools with high response rates have found home visits to be an effective way to distribute surveys to parents and guardians of chronically absent students.

For even younger students, **Red Hat Day Care Center (KBQI)** gets creative. The pre-K program makes paper watches with a reminder about the survey for students to wear home. They then use the Class Dojo app to reward students with points for bringing back their families' completed surveys.