

Sounding Board

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Maximizing Stakeholder Surveys: A Strategic Guide for Charter School Board Members

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As a charter school board member, you play a crucial role in shaping the school's success. One of the most effective tools for assessing school performance and community satisfaction is stakeholder surveys. However, simply collecting data is not enough. Schools must thoughtfully analyze and apply survey results to inform decision-making and drive meaningful improvements. This guide outlines a structured approach to leveraging survey data to enhance school operations and foster trust among students, parents, and staff.

This paper is not intended to be legal advice. Please check with the school's legal counsel and / or the full text of statute for additional information.

Compliance with Authorizer and Minnesota Charter School Reporting Requirements

[MN Stat. §120B.11 Subd. 7](#) mandates that charter schools survey and report on 'affected constituencies' satisfaction in the school's Annual Report as part of the school's accountability to the public. Osprey Wilds has interpreted 'affected constituencies' to be students and parents / guardians who will be referred to in this document as "stakeholders." Although the state does not prescribe specific metrics for measuring stakeholder satisfaction, the survey should assess stakeholder connection to and level of satisfaction with the school. The surveys should be available to parents and guardians in their native languages where appropriate and practicable.

In its Operations Performance Framework, Osprey Wilds includes an additional reporting requirement for schools: parent and student perceptions of safety at the school. In total, Osprey Wilds and the state expect schools to report on four things related to stakeholder surveys:

1. Student connection to and level of satisfaction with the educational program
2. Student perceptions of safety
3. Parent / guardian connection to and level of satisfaction with the educational program
4. Parent / guardian perceptions of safety

In accordance with [MN Stat. § 121A.065](#) the school should ensure a school policy addresses procedures for conducting student surveys and using and distributing personal information on students collected from the surveys. The school may address this in its student handbook, or it may have a standalone policy that specifically addresses surveys. The board may also choose to revise an existing policy, such as the Data Subjects Rights and Access Policy, to explicitly address the use of surveys and survey data.

Surveying students and families accomplishes several things: compliance with legal requirements; fulfillment of a contractual obligation with Osprey Wilds; and reinforcing institutional transparency and stakeholder trust. A proactive approach to surveying stakeholders contributes to a more engaged and informed school community, and survey data can also be leveraged in recruitment efforts to tell the story of the school's successes.

How to Design an Effective Stakeholder Survey

Creating a well-structured stakeholder survey is essential for gathering meaningful insights. Follow these steps to develop an effective survey:

- **Define the survey's purpose:** Identify what specific information you need, whether it's feedback on academics, school culture, communication, perceptions of safety, or other areas.
- **Choose the right question types:** Use a mix of multiple-choice, Likert scale (e.g., a 1-4 scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree), and open-ended questions to get both quantitative and qualitative feedback.
- **Ensure clarity and simplicity:** Keep questions straightforward and free of education jargon to ensure that all stakeholders can easily understand and respond.
- **Make it accessible:** Offer the survey in multiple languages, responsive to your school community and consider providing it in various formats (e.g. paper and digital).
- **Encourage participation:** Communicate the importance of the survey to stakeholders and align the survey launch to other well-attended events like parent conferences or the annual meeting.
- **Analyze and act on results:** Once responses are collected, analyze the data, identify trends, and integrate findings into decision-making processes.
- **Include follow-up steps in the plan.** Giving the survey and analyzing results are only the first step toward maximizing stakeholder surveys. Suggestions for what to do next and share after conducting a survey are outlined in steps 2 and 3 below. When designing the survey, delegate people and hold time on the calendar for follow-up action steps.

Step 1: Develop a Strategic Approach to Survey Data

Survey data should serve as a catalyst for growth and innovation. It is important for schools to create a clear and structured improvement plan that addresses stakeholder feedback while staying aligned with the school's mission, vision, and strategic goals. To maximize the value of the feedback, charter schools should begin by identifying key trends in the responses to uncover common themes, recurring concerns, and areas of excellence. Grouping the feedback into categories such as academic performance, student well-being, and administrative effectiveness can help schools better understand the specific needs of their community. From there, it is important to prioritize action items by determining which concerns require immediate attention and which can be incorporated into long-term planning. Be sure to assign who is responsible for following through with each action item, whether it is a team or individual.

Step 2: Foster a Responsive and Transparent School Culture

Surveys should facilitate open communication and a sense of shared responsibility. To build trust with stakeholders, charter schools must ensure that actions resulting from survey findings align with institutional objectives and contribute to the school's vision and strategic priorities. It is essential to differentiate between school-wide concerns and individual issues, addressing systemic challenges while also responding appropriately to specific feedback. Integrating survey results into policy-making can help refine school policies, instructional approaches, and student support initiatives, making the institution more responsive to stakeholder needs. Engaging staff outside of leadership to form a committee to be responsive to survey results can be a great way to enlist different stakeholders in the process. Transparency is a key factor in maintaining trust; schools should openly communicate survey findings and their planned responses. This level of accountability reinforces stakeholder confidence and fosters a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility.



Step 3: Establish an Ongoing Feedback and Evaluation Cycle

Surveys should not be a one-time assessment but rather part of a continuous improvement cycle. To sustain engagement:

- Develop a structured communication plan: Regularly update stakeholders on survey outcomes and resulting action steps.
- Monitor progress consistently: Conduct internal reviews on a regular basis and share progress reports with stakeholders at scheduled times.
- Ensure accountability: Set measurable goals based on survey feedback and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented changes.
- Encourage ongoing dialogue: Create multiple opportunities for students, parents, and staff to provide input beyond annual surveys.

Conclusion

When used effectively, stakeholder survey data can be a powerful tool for continuous improvement, strategic planning, and community engagement. Charter school board members who actively integrate feedback into decision-making processes can foster a culture of accountability, responsiveness, and excellence. By implementing these best practices, schools can ensure that they meet both statutory and contractual expectations and the needs of students, parents, and staff.