Listening to Teachers: Sample Focus Group and Survey Materials

Overview

The *Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts* supports a process to evaluate the assessments students currently take and then determine the minimum testing necessary to serve essential diagnostic, instructional and accountability purposes. The process should also lead to actions that ensure that every district-mandated assessment is of high quality, provides the information needed for specific school and district purposes, and is supported by structures and routines so that assessment results are actually used and action steps that will help students are taken. While the success of this process rests on several factors, one of the most critical is the extent to which district leaders intentionally incorporate the perspectives, experiences and expertise of teachers and other educators across schools.

Teachers are the primary administrators, interpreters and users of assessments, and their front-line perspectives are essential for "taking the temperature" on the assessment environment in the district and building the case for action. Reviewing and making changes to a district assessment program requires an investment in time and the will to make changes to often-ingrained practices. Clearly communicating to teachers the importance and urgency of this effort will help ensure momentum leading to action. Having clear signals from teachers about the urgency of the effort also will help ensure momentum. Additionally, teachers' experiences and expertise with the assessments their students are taking are foundational to understanding the assessments,

identifying disconnects between purpose and use, how the results are being used, and what can be done to make individual assessments and the district's assessment program as a whole more effective and coherent. Ensuring that teachers understand and support the recommendations that emerge from the inventory process — and if not, revisiting the recommendations — is also a crucial step in ensuring that the process leads to action that benefits students.

This resource is designed to guide districts in the steps necessary **to design and use focus groups and surveys to incorporate teacher perspectives, experiences and expertise in the inventory process**. It includes two types of information.

- **Instructions.** Achieve recommends following a set of steps to design, build, use and analyze teacher surveys and focus groups to effectively incorporate this information in the inventory process and build toward actionable recommendations. **A set of guidance and resources** (beginning on page 2) addresses common questions about how and when to use teacher focus groups and surveys within the inventory process. It also includes design considerations district leaders can consider as they develop these feedback instruments, use information gathered from teachers, and communicate findings with participants and stakeholders. Districts experienced in designing focus groups and surveys may feel comfortable skipping this section and moving directly to the sample teacher focus group and survey questions, beginning on page 6.

- **Inventory Tools.** This resource provides sample teacher focus group and survey questions that district leaders can use or adapt as part of their local assessment inventory process. There are two sets of focus group and survey protocols. **Taking the Temperature on Assessments** (beginning on page 6) focuses on illuminating teacher perspectives on the district's assessment program as a *whole* to build a greater understanding of the testing environment and help build a case for action. **Understanding Assessment Use** (beginning on page 12) is intended to guide districts in developing a more precise understanding of teachers' experiences with *particular assessments* to build toward recommendations for eliminating or strengthening those assessments. Given the large number of assessments that may be administered in a district, it is recommended that districts ask teachers these questions about a limited number of assessments. The criteria for selection of those assessments could include the number of students who take the assessment, assessment cost, or concerns raised by teachers about an assessment during initial focus groups or surveys. Depending on district context, leadership teams may decide to use focus groups or surveys to illuminate teacher perspectives, experiences and expertise. As such, both sections include questions appropriate for each of these formats.

Instructions: Guidance and Resources

This guidance is intended to assist district leaders in developing a process for using teacher focus groups and/or surveys as part of the assessment inventory process.

1. DETERMINING DISTRICT NEEDS FOR TEACHER FEEDBACK BASED ON THE REFLECT AND PLAN QUESTIONS IN THE *STUDENT ASSESSMENT INVENTORY FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS*

At the outset of the assessment inventory process, district leaders should address the Reflect and Plan questions on page 4 of the *Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts*. These questions ask districts to think about the context, objectives and structure of the inventory process. District leaders are then encouraged to develop a baseline understanding of teachers' assessment use through the **Taking the Temperature on Assessments** focus group and survey protocols beginning on page 6. Once that baseline information has been gathered and districts begin to collect information for the Inventory Table (see pages 8 and 9 of the *Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts*), it is recommended that districts then ask teachers about the use of specific local assessments through a separate focus group or survey. Sample questions on this topic can be found in the **Understanding Assessment Use** protocols beginning on page 12.

2. DECIDING WHETHER TO USE A FOCUS GROUP, SURVEY OR BOTH

Once districts have determined whether to use or adapt the **Taking the Temperature on Assessments** or **Understanding Assessment Use** set of protocols, they will need to decide whether using a focus group or survey (or both) is more appropriate to get feedback from teachers. Focus groups allow for additional probing and follow-up questions and also allow asking questions of particular individuals who may have deep knowledge and insight about assessment (e.g., veteran teachers, school assessment coordinators). On the other

hand, focus groups are generally more costly than surveys to organize, staff and analyze, and they require access to skilled focus group moderators. Surveys allow districts to gather information from a large number of teachers in a relatively short period of time, and answers can be easily aggregated. Teachers may also feel more comfortable completing a survey than talking in a focus group. However, surveys do not allow for additional probing questions, and response rates may be low, especially if a survey takes too long to complete. Districts are encouraged to carefully weigh these issues in light of resource and timeline considerations, as well as local context and needs.

3. DESIGNING A SUCCESSFUL FOCUS GROUP OR SURVEY PROCESS

There are multiple design considerations for focus groups and surveys. These include focus group and survey administration, participation, setting and design. The focus group and survey protocols included in this resource are openly licensed, and districts are encouraged to add and/ or adapt questions and protocols as needed based on local priorities and context. Below, focus group and survey design considerations are described separately.

Focus Group Design Considerations

Who should administer a focus group? District leaders can choose to administer their own focus groups or work with an outside organization with experience conducting focus groups. If district leaders decide to keep focus groups in house, they should select focus group moderators who are comfortable speaking with teachers, have a high level of rapport with participants and with whom teachers are likely to feel they can be open and honest. If district leaders have limited time or capacity for conducting focus groups, they can consider utilizing the expertise of local institutes of

higher education, community-based organizations focused on education and consultants with focus group expertise.

Who should participate in a focus group? We encourage districts to make every effort to recruit teachers with diverse perspectives for focus groups. It is helpful to group teachers in such a way as to illuminate the assessment picture from different student perspectives — for example, grouping teachers by grade span, including teachers and other educators in specialized roles (e.g., English language learner specialists, special education specialists, content specialists, instructional coaches, counselors) that add important insights to the assessments students take in those areas. District leaders should also strive to ensure that focus groups are demographically representative of the local teaching force, taking into consideration, for example, race/ethnicity, gender and years of classroom experience.

Additionally, district leaders will want to carefully consider the number of focus groups that will be needed to get a detailed picture of a district's assessment landscape, as well as the number of participants that can be reasonably accommodated in any one focus group. Typically, the most effective focus groups do not exceed more than 10 individuals to allow all participants multiple opportunities to contribute to the conversation. The focus group moderator should be accompanied by a dedicated note-taker so that all responses can be recorded.

What are the best opportunities to conduct a focus group? Districts or community organizations can use a range of formal and informal opportunities to gather feedback through focus groups. There may be already-scheduled events where large numbers of teachers will be present, such as a professional development workshop, which can be convenient and minimally disruptive for participants. Gathering informal feedback through small ad-hoc focus groups is another key opportunity, especially for districts with limited resources or shorter timelines for the inventory process.

Survey Design Considerations

How should surveys be used to generate the most useful information? District leaders should take into account several considerations as they design surveys as part of the inventory process.

- Choose only the questions that are most likely to generate the information needed.

- In prioritizing some questions over others, be sensitive to the time needed to complete the survey.

- Choose question types that best match needs and capacity to analyze data. A variety of question types are included in these sample surveys, all with different implications for data analysis. For instance, open-ended questions have the benefit of enabling respondents to provide their personal feedback, but they can be time consuming to analyze when looking at hundreds of responses. Conversely, multiple-choice responses are very easy to code for data analysis but do not typically give respondents an opportunity to provide in-depth feedback.

- After identifying the questions that would be most helpful, edit them as needed to ensure they fit the district's local context and will resonate with respondents. Phrases in brackets within the template indicate places where the language needs to be customized or removed prior to being released publicly. These areas should be updated with the appropriate information.

- Decide whether to ask respondents to provide the name of their school or other identifying information as part of this survey. If these types of questions are included, it is highly recommended that they be clearly listed as optional and be placed at the end of the survey so individuals are fully aware of what will be shared prior to providing their information.

- Prior to implementing the survey, try out the survey items on a small number of potential survey participants to get their feedback on the questions asked, clarity of questions and length of time the survey took.

Who should administer a survey? Surveys can be administered by a district or third-party organization. District leaders may want to administer their own surveys if they have prior experience developing and administering them, have had good response rates with previous surveys, and/or have sufficient capacity and expertise. District leaders may want to consider using an external, third-party organization to administer a survey if sufficient resources exist to hire an outside firm with expertise, the district has little experience designing and administering its own surveys, and/or there are significant concerns around privacy and anonymity of results.

Who should be surveyed? Depending on district size, resources and capacity, district leaders can choose to either survey all teachers (census survey) or select a representative sample of teachers across multiple criteria (e.g., grade level or span; subject or specialized role, such as English language learner specialists or special education specialists; teaching experience). If district leaders are interested in feedback on a particular assessment (e.g., an assessment used in special education), oversampling a particular group of teachers (e.g., special education teachers) may be warranted. Districts should also strive to collect surveys from a demographically representative sample of the teaching force, taking into consideration, for example, race/ethnicity, gender and years of classroom experience. If initial survey results are not representative, districts should consider targeting additional individuals from underrepresented groups with follow-up survey requests.

4. NEXT STEPS: ANALYSIS, USE AND COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS

After districts have conducted all teacher focus groups and/or surveys, information gathered from these sources needs to be analyzed and incorporated into the Inventory Table (see pages 8 and 9 of the _Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts_). District leaders should also communicate results of the focus groups and surveys to participants (and depending on timing and context, the public) to demonstrate that teachers' voices are being heard in the inventory process.

Analyzing and using results. Focus groups and surveys are part of the inventory process, and districts are encouraged to consider how these findings will inform the Inventory Table, overall analysis and recommendations. Please refer to pages 5–6 of the _Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts_ for a set of potential analysis questions. Analyzing the responses should — like the larger inventory process — emphasize both teacher experiences and impact on students. Do particular assessments mentioned by teachers fall within a specific grade level or grade band, or are these assessments taken by a specific subgroup of students? Are there concerns about the amount of testing in particular grades or subjects? This information from teachers should also help inform the district about the usefulness of specific assessments for particular purposes, such as improving instructional practice or diagnosing student needs. The results may also inform systemic needs around assessment and data literacy, for example. Key findings from focus groups and surveys should be reflected in the Inventory Table and the broader assessment inventory analysis.

Communicating the results to participants and the public. It is important that district leaders communicate to focus group and survey participants that their responses and suggestions are informing recommendations. Examples of communication to participants could include a letter to participants with a summary of what was learned through the sessions or survey, an invitation to a district or board meeting during which results will be discussed, and a timeline for moving from feedback to recommendations to action. District leaders may also want to consider releasing a summarized set of findings from the focus groups and surveys to the broader public as an interim step during the inventory process.

Additional Resources

These additional resources may be helpful in designing and administering surveys and focus groups.

Achieve (2012). _Feedback Loops for Common Core Standards Implementation: Survey Tools for State Education Leaders._ www.achieve.org/files/GuidanceforsurveysFINAL6-25-12-TOSHAREv2.pdf

Duke Initiative on Survey Methodology. http://dism.ssri.duke.edu/resources.php

Pew Research. _Questionnaire Design._ www.people-press.org/methodology/questionnaire-design

Taking the Temperature on Assessments

This section, which includes both sample focus group and survey questions, focuses on illuminating teacher perspectives on the district's assessment program as a whole to build a greater understanding of the testing environment and help build a case for action. It is recommended that these questions be asked of teachers toward the beginning of the process, prior to the Inventory Table being completed. Conducting early focus groups or surveys helps make the case for why an inventory process is needed and will lead to concrete action. It also provides baseline data that districts can use to inform the inventory process and later focus groups and/or surveys on assessment use.

Again, the protocols and questions listed below are openly licensed, and districts are encouraged to add and/or adapt questions and protocols as needed based on local priorities and context.

TAKING THE TEMPERATURE ON ASSESSMENTS: SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION AND WARM-UP

A warm-up period for focus groups is important to help participants understand the goals for the session, create a common understanding around how participants and the moderator will interact, and build comfort among participants and with the moderator. Below are a suggested set of "ground rules" and an introductory exercise, followed by sample focus group questions.

Note to moderator: Prior to conducting this focus group, it is important to be clear with participants about the types of assessments for which the district would like feedback. Will there be discussion only of assessments that are given across multiple classrooms or schools as part of a district/school assessment program, or is the district also interested in teacher-developed classroom assessments? This should be discussed as part of the introduction and warm-up. We encourage you to add and/or adapt questions to best meet your local needs and context.

- **Introduction of moderator and focus group guidelines:**

  > We're going to be talking about testing in our local public schools. This will help the district better understand the volume, quality and use of assessments given in the district.

  > This focus group is part of a larger process to take stock of the local assessments given to students in our district. We hope this process will help districts make decisions about which assessments are high quality and necessary for essential instructional, diagnostic and accountability purposes and which assessments can be modified or eliminated.

  > One person should speak at a time.

  > There are no "wrong" answers to any of these questions. We are interested in hearing your perspectives as teachers.

  > We value confidentiality. We will not associate any feedback that comes out of this focus group with a particular individual.

  > Everyone will have a chance to speak. If you have not had an opportunity to provide your perspective, I may call on you.

  > Please turn off or silence your cell phones.

  > Are there additional norms the group would like to add?

- **Disclosure of note-taking:**

  > A note-taker is present to make sure that we get all of your feedback. The note-taker will not associate comments with names.

- **Parking lot:**

  > There is a "parking lot" chart/board/area where we can put ideas or thoughts that come up in our discussion that are important but may not be related to the purpose of this group. We want to capture those important thoughts, but we also want to keep focused on the purpose of our meeting. These ideas or thoughts will be shared with appropriate individuals following the meeting.

- **Communicating results of focus groups:**

  > The results of the focus groups will be summarized, and you will receive a summary by {date}. If we missed any key points you raised during this conversation, please let us know.

- **Introductory exercise (possible options):**

  > Why did you become a teacher?

  > What is the purpose of education?

  > Describe your most positive experience with taking a test as a student.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What grade(s) and/or subject(s) do you teach?

2. How long have you worked in this district?

3. For teachers who have been working this district for at least five years, how has assessment in this district changed, if at all, in that time?

4. Do you think students in this district are given too many assessments, not enough assessments or about the right number of assessments throughout the school year? Why?

5. What are you hearing about assessment from other teachers? What are you hearing from parents? What are you hearing from students?

6. What are some examples of district assessments that have been helpful to your work, such as informing instructional practice, diagnosing student needs or predicting a student's later performance? How have they been helpful?
   (Moderator prompt: strong alignment to standards, timely results, helpful reporting, helps inform instruction, etc.)

7. What are some examples of local assessments that you have not found helpful in informing instructional practice, diagnosing student needs or predicting a student's later performance? Why have they not been helpful?
   (Moderator prompt: assessment not aligned to standards, results not timely or in a helpful format, not designed to inform instruction, etc.)

   How could they be changed to be more helpful?

8. What local assessments, if any, would you suggest the district continue to administer as it does today? Why?

9. What local assessments, if any, would you suggest the district consider eliminating from the assessment program? Why?

10. What local assessments do you think need significant changes? Why? *(Moderator prompt: improve alignment or reporting, reduce frequency of administration, limit the grades or subject areas assessed, focus on a smaller subset of students who must take the assessment)*

11. Do you see any current gaps in the assessment program that the district should address?

12. Are there any other suggestions you want to make to the district as it reviews assessments?

TAKING THE TEMPERATURE ON ASSESSMENTS:
SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS

Sample language to introduce the survey: This survey asks questions about assessments given in this district. It is part of a larger process to take stock of all administered assessments and make decisions about which assessments are high quality and necessary for essential instructional, diagnostic and accountability purposes and which assessments can be modified or eliminated. Your responses to this survey are very important and will help shape recommendations for the future of the district's assessment program. Finally, your responses to this survey are confidential — we do not ask for any personally identifying information. If you have questions about this survey, please contact {survey administrator}.

Note to survey designer: Prior to administering this survey, it is important to be clear with respondents about the types of assessments for which the district would like feedback. Is the primary focus on assessments given across multiple classrooms or schools as part of a district/school assessment program, or is the district also interested in teacher-developed classroom assessments? The district should also explain how results of the survey will be used, whether district stakeholders will be presented with a summary of findings and how these findings will be used to inform action.

1. **What grade(s) do you teach?**
   {district should prepopulate with grades}

2. **What subject(s) do you teach?**
   {district should prepopulate with subjects}

3. **How long have you worked in this district?**
   - ❏ 1–3 years
   - ❏ 4–10 years
   - ❏ More than 10 years

4. **Do you think students in this district are given too many assessments, not enough assessments or about the right number of assessments throughout the school year?**
   - ❏ Not enough assessments
   - ❏ About the right number of assessments
   - ❏ Too many assessments

5. **Do you think the time spent on assessment in this district is too much, too little or about right?**
   - ❏ Too little
   - ❏ About right
   - ❏ Too much

6. *Please answer this question if you have been working in this district for at least five years:* **How has assessment in this district changed, if at all, over the past five years?** {open-ended item}

7. **What level of concern have you heard about the time spent on assessments from *peers*?**
    - ❏ No concern
    - ❏ Some concern
    - ❏ A lot of concern

8. **What other concerns about assessments, if any, have you heard from *peers*?** {open-ended item}

9. **What level of concern have you heard about the time spent on assessments from *parents*?**
    - ❏ No concern
    - ❏ Some concern
    - ❏ A lot of concern

10. **What other concerns about assessments, if any, have you heard from *parents*?** {open-ended item}

11. **What are some examples of district assessments that you have found helpful for improving your instruction?** {the district can prepopulate this item with a list of assessments given in the district if known}

12. **In general, what aspects of these district assessments make them helpful?**
    - ❏ Strong alignment to standards
    - ❏ Rapid turnaround of results
    - ❏ Easily understood student-level reports
    - ❏ Other _____

13. **What are some examples of district assessments that you have found helpful for diagnosing student needs?** {the district can prepopulate this item with a list of assessments given in the district if known}

14. **In general, what aspects of these assessments make them helpful?**
    - ❏ Strong alignment to standards
    - ❏ Rapid turnaround of results
    - ❏ Easily understood student-level reports
    - ❏ Other _____

15. **What are some examples of district assessments that you have found helpful for predicting student performance?** {the district can prepopulate this item with a list of assessments given in the district if known}

16. **In general, what aspects of these assessments make them helpful?**
    - ❏ Strong alignment to standards
    - ❏ Rapid turnaround of results
    - ❏ Easily understood student-level reports
    - ❏ Other _____

17. **What are some examples of district assessments that you have not found helpful for improving your instruction?** {the district can prepopulate this item with a list of assessments given in the district if known}

18. **In general, what aspects of these assessments make them *not* helpful?**
    ❏ Weak alignment to standards
    ❏ Slow or delayed turnaround of results
    ❏ Difficult-to-understand or inadequate student-level reports
    ❏ Other _____

19. **What are some examples of district assessments that you have *not* found helpful for diagnosing student needs?** {the district can prepopulate this item with a list of assessments given in the district if known}

20. **In general, what aspects of these assessments make them *not* helpful?**
    ❏ Weak alignment to standards
    ❏ Slow or delayed turnaround of results
    ❏ Difficult-to-understand student-level reports
    ❏ Other _____

21. **What are some examples of district assessments that you have found *not* helpful for predicting student performance?** {the district can prepopulate this item with a list of assessments given in the district if known}

22. **In general, what aspects of these assessments make them *not* helpful?**
    ❏ Weak alignment to standards
    ❏ Slow or delayed turnaround of results
    ❏ Difficult-to-understand or inadequate student-level reports
    ❏ Other _____

23. **Which local assessments, if any, would you suggest the district continue to use as it does today?** {open-ended item OR district can list specific assessments}

24. **Which local assessments, if any, would you suggest the district think about eliminating from the assessment program?** {open-ended item OR district can list specific assessments}

25. **Which local assessments do you think need significant changes?** {open-ended item OR district can list specific assessments}

26. **Do you see any current gaps in the assessment program that the district should address?** {open-ended item}

27. **Are there any other suggestions you want to make to the district as it reviews assessments?** {open-ended item}

Understanding Assessment Use

These sample focus group and survey questions are intended to guide districts in developing a more precise understanding of teachers' experiences with particular assessments to build toward recommendations for eliminating or strengthening those assessments. Given the large number of assessments that may be administered in a district, it is recommended that districts ask teachers these questions about a limited number of assessments. The criteria for selection of those assessments could include the number of students who take the assessment, assessment cost, or concerns raised by teachers about an assessment during initial focus groups or surveys (see Taking the Temperature on Assessments protocols on page 6). The teacher feedback on assessment use collected through these focus groups and surveys is designed to inform the questions on assessment use on particular assessments for the Inventory Table. Finally, the protocols and questions listed below are openly licensed, and districts are encouraged to add and/or adapt questions and protocols as needed based on local priorities and context.

UNDERSTANDING ASSESSMENT USE: SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION AND WARM-UP

A warm-up period for focus groups is important to help participants understand the goals for the session, create a common understanding around how participants and the moderator will interact, and build comfort among participants and with the moderator. Below are a suggested set of "ground rules" and an introductory exercise, followed by sample focus group questions.

- **Introduction of moderator and focus group guidelines:**

  > We're going to be talking about testing in our local public schools. This will help the district better understand the volume, quality and use of assessments given in the district.

  > This focus group is part of a larger process to take stock of the local assessments given to students in our district. We hope this process will help districts make decisions about which assessments are high quality and necessary for essential instructional, diagnostic and accountability purposes and which assessments can be modified or eliminated.

  > One person should speak at a time.

  > There are no "wrong" answers to any of these questions. We are interested in hearing your perspectives as teachers.

  > We value confidentiality. We will not associate any feedback that comes out of this focus group with a particular individual.

  > Everyone will have a chance to speak. If you have not had an opportunity to provide your perspective, I may call on you.

  > Please turn off or silence your cell phones.

  > Are there additional norms the group would like to add?

- **Disclosure of note-taking:**

  > A note-taker is present to make sure that we get all of your feedback. The note-taker will not associate comments with names.

- **Parking lot:**

  > There is a "parking lot" chart/board/area where we can put ideas or thoughts that come up in our discussion that are important but may not be related to the purpose of this group. We want to capture those important thoughts, but we also want to keep focused on the purpose of our meeting. These ideas or thoughts will be shared with appropriate individuals following the meeting.

- **Communicating results of focus groups:**

  > The results of the focus groups will be summarized, and you will receive a summary by {date}. If we missed any key points you raised during this conversation, please let us know.

- **Introductory exercise (possible options):**

  > Why did you become a teacher?

  > What is the purpose of education?

  > Describe your most positive experience with taking a test as a student.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What grade(s) and/or subject(s) do you teach?

2. How long have you worked in this district?

At this point, the moderator will want to drill down into more detail on a couple of assessments identified as either helpful or unhelpful. These assessments may have been identified through the Taking the Temperature on Assessments process, or district leaders may have a few specific assessments on which they want to focus. The following questions are designed to ask about particular assessments, not the full suite of assessments given to students.

3. Based on your understanding of {Assessment X}, how well does this assessment align to the content standards?

   • Follow-up question: How do you know?

4. What is your understanding of the purpose of {Assessment X} — what is it designed to measure?

5. What are the ways you use {Assessment X}?
   (Note: Moderator can suggest some possibilities here, such as informing instructional practice; predicting performance on a future assessment; diagnosing individual student strengths and needs; factoring into high school graduation, student promotion/retention and course grades; and as part of evaluating teachers.)

6. To what degree do you find {Assessment X} useful or not useful? Why?

7. How much time does it take to receive results from {Assessment X}? Is the information included in a helpful format with the right level of detail? What kinds of information would be useful to have but are not currently available? How would you use this information?

8. Have you received training on interpreting and using the results of {Assessment X} and integrating that information into instruction? What was the quality of that training, and what could be improved?

9. Would you recommend that the district/school continue to administer {Assessment X}? Why or why not?

10. Would you recommend that the district/school continue to administer {Assessment X} to the same group of students or more/fewer students? At the same frequency or more/less often? In more/fewer subjects?

11. If you would recommend continuing {Assessment X}, how might you suggest strengthening the assessment, if at all?

UNDERSTANDING ASSESSMENT USE: SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS

Sample language to introduce the survey: This survey asks questions about assessments given in this district. It is part of a larger process to take stock of all administered assessments and make decisions about which assessments are high quality and necessary for essential instructional, diagnostic and accountability purposes and which assessments can be modified or eliminated. Your responses to this survey are very important and will help shape recommendations for the future of the district's assessment program. Finally, your responses to this survey are confidential — we do not ask for any personally identifying information. If you have questions about this survey, please contact {survey administrator}.

Note to survey designer: Prior to administering this survey, it is important to be clear with respondents about the types of assessments for which the district would like feedback. Is the primary focus on assessments given across multiple classrooms or schools as part of a district/school assessment program, or is the district also interested in teacher-developed classroom assessments? The district should also explain how results of the survey will be used, whether district stakeholders will be presented with a summary of findings and how these findings will be used to inform action.

1. **What grade(s) do you teach? {district should prepopulate with grades}**

2. **What subject(s) do you teach? {district should prepopulate with subjects}**

At this point, the moderator will want to drill down into more detail on a couple of assessments identified as either helpful or unhelpful. These assessments may have been identified through the Taking the Temperature on Assessments process, or district leaders may have a few specific assessments on which they want to focus. The following questions are designed to ask about particular assessments, not the full suite of assessments given to students.

Now we would like to ask you a few questions specifically about {Assessment X}.

3. **How strong is the alignment between {Assessment X} and {the state standards}?**
   - ❏ Very strongly aligned
   - ❏ Strongly aligned
   - ❏ Somewhat aligned
   - ❏ Not aligned
   - ❏ Don't know

4. **Why did you choose this alignment strength? {open-ended}**

5. How do you use {Assessment X}? (Select all that apply.)

❏ Informing instructional practice

❏ Predicting performance on a future assessment

❏ Diagnosing individual student strengths and needs

❏ Instructional uses (e.g., reteaching a concept, flexible grouping)

❏ Promoting or retaining a student

❏ Factoring into course grades

❏ Evaluating teacher effectiveness

❏ Other

6. How useful do you find the results of {Assessment X} for the intended purpose(s)? (Complete all that apply.)

a. Understanding student achievement and/or growth to set goals

❏ Very useful

❏ Useful

❏ Somewhat useful

❏ Not useful

b. Informing instructional practice

❏ Very useful

❏ Useful

❏ Somewhat useful

❏ Not useful

c. Predicting performance on a future assessment

❏ Very useful

❏ Useful

❏ Somewhat useful

❏ Not useful

d. Diagnosing individual student strengths and needs

❏ Very useful

❏ Useful

❏ Somewhat useful

❏ Not useful

e. Instructional uses (e.g., reteaching a concept, flexible grouping)

❏ Very useful

❏ Useful

❏ Somewhat useful

❏ Not useful

f. Promoting or retaining a student

❏ Very useful

❏ Useful

❏ Somewhat useful

❏ Not useful

g. Factoring into course grades

❏ Very useful

❏ Useful

❏ Somewhat useful

❏ Not useful

h. Evaluating teacher effectiveness

❏ Very useful

❏ Useful

❏ Somewhat useful

❏ Not useful

i. Other: _____

❏ Very useful

❏ Useful

❏ Somewhat useful

❏ Not useful

7. What level of training have you received on {Assessment X}, including its purpose, intended uses, administration, and interpretation and use of results?

❏ Significant training — training that included purpose, intended uses, administration, and interpretation and use of results

❏ Some training — training that included purpose, intended uses, administration, or interpretation and use of results but not all of these

❏ No training

8. Do you receive information about how your students did on {Assessment X}?

❏ Yes

❏ No

If yes, when do you receive the information?

❏ Within 24 hours

❏ Within one week

❏ Within one month

❏ Longer than one month

To what degree is this information helpful?

❏ Very helpful

❏ Helpful

❏ Neither helpful nor unhelpful

❏ Unhelpful

❏ Very unhelpful

What changes, if any, would you make to the information you receive from {Assessment X} to make it more helpful? Why? {open-ended item}

9. Would you recommend that the district/school continue to administer {Assessment X}?

❏ Strongly recommend

❏ Recommend

❏ Recommend with reservations

❏ Do not recommend

❏ Do not have enough information to make a recommendation

10. If you recommended {Assessment X} with reservations, what specific suggestions would you make, if any, to strengthen this assessment or its administration (e.g., length, frequency, number of students required to take the assessment, etc.)? {open-ended item}