

Tell Them From Me student survey Frequently Asked Questions

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

1. What is the *Tell Them From Me* student survey?

The *Tell Them From Me* student survey is a measure of student voice that provides school principals and school leaders with insight into student engagement, wellbeing and experience of effective teaching practices at their school.

The survey is confidential and can be used either as a one-off survey or to identify trends within schools over time and better inform school priorities. The survey is held once a year, with an optional second survey within the year.

More than 145,000 students from over 350 NSW government secondary schools and 91,000 students from 850 NSW government primary schools participated in the survey in 2015.

2. What are the benefits for my school?

The *Tell Them From Me* student survey provides school principals and school leaders with students' perspectives on their experiences of school and learning. This can be used to help build an accurate and timely picture to inform school planning.

Data reports are provided to school leaders within three business days of the surveys closing. Reports include: a 'one click' PDF summary report of their school's results; interactive charts which look more closely at their school results for specific groups of students (e.g. by gender or year group); and thematic reports, e.g. student engagement report. Schools can compare their results with a replica school – a virtual school of students who have similar characteristics (year, gender and socio-economic characteristics).



3. How does this survey relate to the school planning cycle?

The *Tell Them From Me* student, parent and teacher surveys provide valid and reliable data to help schools during the 2015-2017 planning cycle, including with the annual review of strategic directions, development of improvement measures and milestones, self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework and preparation of the annual school report. The survey data can help schools:

- understand students' perspectives on critical aspects of their school experience, such as social and institutional engagement, wellbeing and exposure to quality teaching practices
- provide evidence of areas of strength to support self-assessment and reporting
- engage the school community in discussions to identify strategic directions for school improvement
- establish quantitative improvement measures and help schools track achievement against them.

4. How are these surveys different from existing Departmental surveys on the School Survey System?

Schools have access to national and Departmental surveys of students, parents and teachers through the School Survey System. The *Tell Them From Me* suite of student, parent and teacher surveys incorporate many of the same topics and have some similarly worded questions. However, they also:

- include a number of different measures
- bring student, teacher and parent surveys together in a single reporting tool
- will include data collected over multiple years
- enable comparison with state averages and like-for-like replica schools.

5. How will the student, parent and teacher surveys help the Department support better student outcomes?

The Department is committed to using data, evidence and evaluation to inform its planning and practice. The survey data allows the Department, through the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE), to analyse and better understand student performance data and the impact of engagement, wellbeing and teaching practices on student outcomes.

6. What kind of questions will the student surveys ask?

The survey questions relate to the following 18 measures for **primary schools**:

Participation in sports	Behaviour at school	Effective learning time
Participation in extra-curricular activities	Homework behaviour	Teaching relevance
Sense of belonging	Interest and motivation	Teaching rigour
Positive relationships	Effort	Experience of being bullied
Valuing school outcomes	Skills and learning challenge	Advocacy at school
Positive teacher student relations	Expectations for success	Positive learning climate

The survey questions relate to the following 22 measures for **secondary schools**:

Participation in sports	Homework behaviour	Expectations for success
Positive learning climate	Participation in clubs	Behaviour at school
Experience of being bullied	Truancy	Sense of belonging
Interest and motivation	Effective learning time	Aspirations: finishing Year 12, University, TAFE
Positive relationships	Effort	Teaching relevance
Wellness	Valuing school outcomes	Positive learning climate
Teaching rigour	Advocacy at school	Advocacy outside school
Positive teacher student relations	–	–

Some additional questions will also be asked to gain a socio-economic status (SES) profile of students. Students do not need to answer these questions if they do not wish.

Schools will also be able to include their own custom questions in closed and open-ended format during the optional second survey. Individual responses to the open-ended questions will not be passed on to CESE researchers.

7. Which student groups will take the survey?

The primary school survey has been specifically designed for students in Years 4 to 6. The secondary school survey is designed for students in Years 7 to 12.

8. How many students can take part in the surveys?

All students in Years 4 to 6 and 7 to 12 are encouraged to take part. The more students who complete the survey, the more reliable a school's data will be.

9. What is the cost to my school?

The surveys are provided free of charge to schools. In return, schools are asked to ensure that:

- time and computers are made available to students to take the survey
- as many students as possible complete the survey.

CESE may also ask schools to take part in a feedback questionnaire once the surveys have finished.

10. How will the survey be conducted?

The survey is conducted entirely online during specific survey windows. This will be during Term 1 for the first survey and Term 3 for the optional second survey. The survey will take 15 to 20 minutes on average and no more than 30 minutes for most students.

Schools will need to make school computers available for students to complete the survey. Schools will be provided with information and consent forms for distribution to parents. Schools will also be provided with unique student usernames and passwords prior to the start of the survey period.

To protect student confidentiality, data suppression rules are applied to the school reporting tools where sample sizes are too small.

11. Will support be available to schools during the survey period?

Schools will have access to technical support provided by *The Learning Bar*, the company that has been contracted to supply the surveys for the Department. A free-call telephone number and email address will be provided to participating schools. Support will be available every day during term time between 8.30am and 4.30pm, before, during and after active survey periods.



12. Will training be available to school coordinators?

Online live training and information webinars will be offered to all schools. All school coordinators and principals are encouraged to attend one of these training sessions prior to the survey window. There will also be additional webinars offered at the end of the survey period providing information about how to interpret the reports and analyse the data provided by the surveys.

13. Can I see the survey questions?

Schools will be able to view the surveys online via a password protected portal once they have formally committed to undertaking the surveys. The survey questions are available in PDF form for participating schools. Please note that the survey questions are the intellectual property of *The Learning Bar* and must not be distributed beyond your school or used in any manner other than that stipulated by the Department.

14. Can I ask my own questions?

Yes. Schools will be able to include customised questions in closed and open-ended format for the optional second student survey in 2016. Individual responses to the open-ended questions will not be passed on to CESE researchers.

15. How does the TTFM student survey relate to the teacher and parent surveys?

CESE is offering the full suite of *Tell Them From Me* surveys (student, parent and teacher surveys) to ensure schools can capture the views of students, teachers and parents. The surveys are complementary.

For more detail on each of the surveys, see the survey website: <http://surveys.cese.nsw.gov.au/>

16. Will the surveys all take place at the same time?

The student surveys will take place in the second half of Term 1 and (optionally) Term 3. The parent and teacher surveys will take place at the same time as the second student survey in Term 3.

17. Can our school do one of the surveys and not the others?

Schools can take part in the student survey without taking part in either the teacher or parent surveys. However, schools must commit to do the student survey to be able to run the parent and/or teacher survey. Some exceptions do apply to schools in special circumstances, such as infants schools, schools for specific purposes (SSP schools) or schools participating in the pilot 2014 Focus on Learning teacher survey.

18. Has the survey been used in Australia before?

To date, over 1,000 Australian schools (more than 200,000 students) have used the *Tell Them From Me* student survey. Most of these are public secondary and primary schools in NSW. A small number of schools in Queensland and Victoria are also using *Tell Them From Me*.

These schools have helped *The Learning Bar* adapt their survey so that it is appropriate for use in an Australian context.

19. My school is small. Will the survey work for me?

To protect student confidentiality, data suppression rules do apply where fewer than five students answer a question. This may limit the capacity of small schools to drill down into their data.

Small schools can choose to cluster together, allowing them to pool data. Clustering is completely optional. To form a cluster, all schools involved must agree. If schools form a cluster this will mean that these schools receive a report that shows the combined data from all the schools in that particular cluster. These schools will also receive their individual school report if enough data has been collected to protect student confidentiality.

Please indicate whether you would like to be part of a school cluster when lodging your expression of interest.

20. Can infants schools, SSP schools or other schools with special circumstances participate?

The student survey is only suitable for students in Years 4 to 12. It cannot be changed for students in special circumstances. However, infants schools, SSP schools and other schools in special circumstances may do the parent and/or teacher surveys without doing the student survey.

21. What provisions are made for students with low literacy?

The Department has some advice relating to text-to-voice technology available on the *Tell Them From Me* online portal in the 'access resources' folder.

22. Who will be able to see my school's data?

Schools will be able to see their own aggregated data. They will not see individual student responses.

CESE researchers will have access to student level data for system wide analysis. The researchers are interested in trends only, not individual student responses. CESE will not be able to see responses to your school's custom questions. No student will be identified in any publication. No school will be identified unless they have given permission.

As with other Departmental data, your Director, Public Schools and selected policy staff from State Office may view your school's report.

Schools are encouraged to use the data as part of their ongoing community and stakeholder discussion.

21. What will happen next for schools that choose to participate in the student survey?

Early Term 1	Schools provided with information and consent forms for parents.
	Training for school principals and coordinators in using the survey website conducted via webinar. Schools provided with student log-ins and passwords.
Mid-Term 1 – end of Term 1	Active period for surveys. Help desk support will be available. Schools receive reports three days after closing their survey.
Early Term 2	Training for school principals and coordinators in analysing school survey results (conducted by webinar).
Mid-Term 3	Active period for optional teacher, parent and second student surveys.
Term 4	Training for school principals and coordinators in analysing school survey results (conducted by webinar).



What is CESE?

The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) is part of the Department of Education.

CESE has been established to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of education in New South Wales. CESE identifies and shares what works, creating new opportunities to improve teaching and learning across all of education.

More information about CESE is available at: www.cese.nsw.gov.au

What is *The Learning Bar*?

The Learning Bar is a Canadian education company that specialises in school surveys for both primary and secondary students. Its survey, *Tell Them From Me*, is the largest national school survey in Canada, used in nine of Canada's ten provinces. More than 2,600 schools and 1.7 million Canadian students have participated in the survey over the last nine years. Australian schools have been participating in the *Tell Them From Me* surveys since 2012.

The Learning Bar is led by Dr J Douglas Willms. Dr Willms is a Professor and Director of the Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy at the University of New Brunswick, and holds the Canada Research Chair in Literacy and Human Development. Dr Willms led the development of questions on student engagement for the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

More information about *The Learning Bar* is available at: www.thelearningbar.com

If you have any questions about the student survey, please contact CESE via email: TTFM@det.nsw.edu.au or by telephone: 9561 8331 /9561 8056 /9561 8370.