

Answering Students' Frequently Asked Questions

A number of concerns have been raised by students regarding the OurSCHOOL surveys. Typically, student feedback relates to the following:

- What is the purpose of this survey?
- Do I have to do this survey?
- Is this a test?
- Will anyone see my answers?
- Why are the questions so personal?
- Why do you want to know if I'm Aboriginal?
- Why do you include questions that are unrelated to school?
- Where do my answers go when I complete the survey?
- What if I don't understand a question?
- Why is there no back button?
- Why does the time bar jump?
- Why do you ask the same questions each year?

1. What is the purpose of this survey?

This survey helps teachers and principals know students' feelings towards school, any problems that may be occurring at the school, and ideas for making the school better. This is your chance to tell your teachers and school staff what you think.

2. Do I have to do this survey?

This survey is voluntary. Students are asked to participate to help make their school better. If you do not want to participate, you do not have to. Also, if you start answering questions and you want to stop participating, you can choose to stop at any time. Finally, you can choose to skip or not answer any question(s) you do not feel comfortable answering.

3. Is this a test?

No, this is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. Nothing you say on this survey will ever be connected with you, your grades, or your performance in school. Your teachers and school staff will never see your answers. Be honest, and be yourself, and that will help to make your school a better place!

4. Will anyone see my answers?

This survey is anonymous, and no one will ever know your answers except you. This survey does not ask for your name, or student ID number, so your answers cannot be connected to you. That means your teachers, school staff, friends, and parents will never know your answers. All usernames and passwords for the OurSCHOOL survey are randomly generated by a computer. Also, no one will ever see individual students' answers. Answers for the entire grade or school are always combined and displayed together. If less than five students in a grade or school answer a certain question, then the results for that question are not displayed. This way, no one can ever identify which students provided which answers, and everyone remains anonymous.

5. Why are the questions so personal?

The survey asks some questions that may seem very personal or private, such as parents' education, students' height and weight, and or smoking, drinking, and drug use behaviours. We ask these questions because they are important and are linked to student health and wellness.

It is important to remember that the survey is anonymous, and no one will ever know your answers. Answers to these questions help to give us information about your school community, and the types of backgrounds and families in your area. This helps us to understand which schools have the same types of students with similar backgrounds.

6. Why do you want to know if I'm Aboriginal or an Immigrant?

The OurSCHOOL survey is a great chance for students to have their voices heard. Sometimes it is important to hear the concerns and thoughts of certain groups of students, such as students who are Aboriginal or Immigrants. We ask students if they belong to certain groups, such as being Aboriginal or an Immigrant. Answering "yes" to these questions will help your school know what the concerns, feelings, and thoughts are for students like you. However, we are also careful about protecting your identity. If you indicate that you are Aboriginal or an Immigrant, it will not be possible for your teachers, Principals, or other school staff to identify your responses. Your answers will always remain anonymous.

7. Why do you include questions that are unrelated to school?

Some of the questions may seem unrelated to school, but all questions included in the OurSCHOOL survey help tell us about students, their health, and their school outcomes. Even things that do not seem related to school, like the foods we eat or how much time we watch TV at home, can give us important information on how to help students be successful at school. If you really want to know why a question is being asked, and you cannot find out from the person coordinating the survey at your school or from your Principal, you are invited to ask us through your school, and we will do our best to explain.

8. Where do my answers go when I complete the survey?

Your anonymous answers to the survey questions are sent over a secure data line to The Learning Bar database server. Your answers are combined with the answers of other students in the same grade and school. Information from this database is used to make reports for your school to look at, showing the combined answers of all the students in your school. These reports are used to show teachers and school staff how they can make your school better for students.

9. What if I don't understand a question?

We try to make the questions easy to understand, so if you have trouble understanding a question, please tell your teacher or the school staff member who is coordinating the survey. If you need help to answer a question, raise your hand and ask for assistance.

10. Why is there no Back-button?

There is no "back-button" on the OurSCHOOL survey. This means once you finish a page of the survey, you cannot go back and make changes to your previous answers. This helps to protect your answers, so other students who use the same computer after you cannot use the back-button to see your answers and it helps you complete the survey on-time. However, it also means that if you make a mistake you cannot go back and fix it. Therefore, it's important to be careful when you are doing the survey. But remember, this is not a test, and one or two mistakes will not make a big difference in the final results for the whole school.

11. Why does the time bar jump?

There is a time bar on the top of each page as you go through the survey. This shows how many questions you have left to complete on the survey. However, this bar does not move or go up after each question you finish, it only goes up after each page you finish. This means that the time bar may go up a lot for one a page that contains many questions but only a little for a page that contains only a few questions.

12. Why do you ask the same questions each year?

Students who have completed the OurSCHOOL survey multiple times in their school may notice that we ask the same questions. This is very useful, as it allows us to see how students' responses to the same questions change over time. You might think we are just getting the same results to the same questions each year but, actually, the same students can give different results as they move up a grade and have new teachers, or as new events happen in their school. Many Principals and teachers use the results of the OurSCHOOL survey to make positive changes to their school. Asking the same questions each year helps us inform school staff if the changes they made to the school have made an impact on how students feel about the school. Asking the same questions each year helps us to track these changes over time.