

Collecting Our Data

INFORMATION BRIEF:

Getting a good response to questionnaires

Questionnaires are an evaluation method very familiar to most educators. Questionnaires, paper or electronic, consist of a set of questions or items that are designed for a selected group of people, such as teachers, administrators, parents, students, or others.

Questionnaires vary in length, focus, and types of items, such as checklists, Likert scales, or open-ended questions and are particularly useful in gathering data from large groups of people about perceptions, attitudes, intended actions or application of learning.

The following are a few simple pointers for obtaining a good response to your questionnaire:

- Talk it up. Let people know how important their responses are and that you'll be sharing the findings with them.
- Reassure potential respondents that the questionnaires are anonymous and that no one will be recognizable in the reported findings.
- One strategy that is often effective in building questionnaire response is what you might call a "one-two punch." You might start off by conducting focus groups or informal interviews to hear what people's ideas or concerns are before developing the questionnaire. Let people know that you'll be developing the questionnaire based on what you hear in the focus groups and interviews. You'll very likely find that listening to your colleagues first will have a big effect on the questions you ask in the questionnaire. The result of this process is usually increased buy-in, strong response to the questionnaire, and comments from respondents that they appreciate being asked the questions that really matter to them.
- As you develop your questionnaire, be sure not to ask leading questions or give the impression that you want people to answer the questions in a certain way. If people get that sense, they very often will not bother to respond.
- Give people enough time to respond to the questionnaire, without giving them so much time that they put it off and eventually forget about it. Usually 10 days is plenty of time to respond. Make sure that you communicate the deadline clearly and that everyone understands how and where to submit responses.
- Another strategy that is effective in getting good response is to allow time during a meeting (not at the end) to complete the questionnaire.