

Practical resources and case studies to increase participation in the *Tell Them From Me* parent survey

Lifting participation in the *Tell Them From Me* (TTFM) parent survey can be challenging. However, having a high participation rate is valuable because it helps schools to reliably identify areas of strength and areas for improvement from the perspective of parents, and to inform practical changes where needed.

Following are a number of resources and case studies that schools with high rates of parent participation have found successful.

Using school-wide events

Ashmont Public School, located in Wagga Wagga, uses a school-wide event to encourage participation in the parent TTFM survey. Parents are invited to attend the school for 30 minutes during the 'Learning Journeys' week at the end of Term 3 to see how their child's learning is progressing. After viewing their child's portfolio with their child and the classroom teacher, parents and their children are encouraged to enjoy morning tea and complete the parent survey. Student Learning Support Officers serve morning tea and ensure survey completion runs smoothly.

According to the principal, Diana McGregor, the Learning Journeys event is a friendly, student-led and informal approach that ensures the school gets feedback from parents. It strengthens relationships between staff and parents and between staff members.



Almost all parents who attend this event complete the survey, although completion rates outside of this event are low. A third of the class is present during a learning journey, which enables teachers to spend quality time with each parent and develop relationships and understanding of each student. A class teacher has three learning journey sessions during the survey window. All students have the opportunity to present their learning journey to a parent or carer.

Developing a dedicated communications strategy to improve response rates

Normanhurst Boys High School, a selective school in Sydney with an engaged parent community, achieves strong participation in parent surveys by developing a communications strategy. Many students live some distance away from the school, which means that electronic communication is the most effective way to communicate with parents about the TTFM parent survey.

The school's communications include:

- A personalised email sent to all parents about participating in the survey with key information and a link to the survey.
- A section in their newsletter dedicated to TTFM throughout the survey period, with images to attract attention and alert parents to the deadline.
- Information in the newsletter on the current response rate just prior to the deadline. In this communication, the principal encourages all parents to have their say, including those who are happy with the school, to ensure that survey results are representative and statistically valid. The link to the survey is also included to encourage more parents to fill it in.

Bankstown West Public School has a two-stage approach to maximise parent participation in the TTFM survey. Bankstown West is a primary school located in western Sydney, with over 95% of students having a language background other than English.

In stage one, the school focuses on getting parents to complete the survey at the school. Classrooms near school entry points are opened up to parents to complete the survey before and after school, with devices set up and a staff member available to assist as needed. Dedicating a place and time to complete the survey effectively encourages higher parent participation. Student leaders and some confident Kindergarten students then ask parents and carers if they would like to participate, and willing parents are shown by students to a classroom to complete the survey. Once completed, their child's name goes into the raffle draw.

In stage two, the school focuses on increasing participation of parents through online methods. School staff post the survey link in the 'school story' of their in-school electronic communication platform, ClassDojo, to communicate with all parents. They ask parents to help the school and their children by providing feedback. If parents send through a screenshot of the final screen of the survey, their child will receive a small reward (ice block or sticker). This approach has been successful because the school uses established relationships and communication channels to connect directly with parents with a specific request.

Providing feedback to the parent community

Minchinbury Public School, in western Sydney, has developed strong relationships and trust with the parent community, leading to a willingness of parents to engage with the school.

The principal, Rebecca Webster, says that she explains to parents that, 'we can't know your concerns or make changes at the school if you don't tell us what you think'. In each survey period, the school refers to concerns expressed in past parent surveys and the school's response, to remind parents that their feedback leads to tangible change. This encourages parents to complete the survey each year, and gives the school a representative sample of parent views. Results of the survey are shared with the P&C, in the school newsletter and in the school's communication app, Seesaw. This demonstrates the school's commitment to transparency, parent engagement and school improvement.

Making parent engagement a strategic priority for the school

Sometimes schools have to lift low levels of parent engagement more broadly to increase engagement with the parent TTFM survey. **Mount Austin High School**, located in the Riverina, has done this by developing a whole-school approach to parent engagement, and making it a strategic priority.

The principal explains that parents started to engage more with the school after seeing efforts the school was making. These efforts included improving student wellbeing and discipline systems, and prioritising professional learning to help staff respond more effectively to student needs. Parents started to come to school events in larger numbers and engage more frequently with the school, which is an ongoing process. This broad engagement now includes more responses to the parent TTFM survey. The school lets parents know that their responses are valued and will lead to change.





Parent participation in the TTFM survey in an SSP context

The **Newcastle** community of schools for specific purpose (SSP) is located across 3 campuses, and caters for students with significant disabilities. The school uses results from the parent TTFM survey tailored to the SSP context to inform their strategic directions.

Newcastle community of schools receive anonymous, formal feedback and detailed insight into the parent perspective from the TTFM parent survey. This SSP provides feedback linking school changes implemented with strategic directions to parents. Parents and teachers share information on a day-to-day basis via a communication book, alongside formal feedback from TTFM.

The Newcastle schools encourage parents to complete the survey via the school newsletter, Facebook and SkoolBag app. Multiple communication channels are used to reach and remind parents to fill in the survey. Information included in communication about the TTFM parent survey:

- How the results will help improve the school
- Letting parents know the school has specific questions to inform future strategic directions
- A reminder to parents that questions are tailored for special education settings, if parents indicate that their child attends one
- A link to the survey and the duration of the survey window
- The range of devices that can be used to complete the survey.

Parents can also complete the survey on a device set up in the office area of each school campus. A counter, updated regularly, displays the number of completed surveys for parents to see in the office area. Parents are given a visual reminder and subtly encouraged to fill in the survey throughout the survey window. A wide cross-section of parents visit this space frequently.

Examples of resources used by schools with high response rates

Newsletter Text

Ashmont Public School

Learning Journey

Hopefully all parents have been given their times for their child's Learning Journey. The Learning Journey allows each child to present their work and show their pride in how far they have come during the year. If you have not received your time please contact your child's classroom teacher.

Tell Them From Me Surveys

Once again it is time to hear from students, teachers and parents about their thoughts on the different aspects of school. Parents will get their opportunity to complete a survey after their Learning Journey sessions next week. Students and teachers will complete the online surveys over the next few weeks. Take the opportunity to have your thoughts and opinions heard.

Minchinbury Public School

2018 *The Partners in Learning* parent feedback survey

Dear MPS families,

Thank you to those families who have completed this survey online.

I hope you know that I want and appreciate feedback. Feedback and constructive criticism will always make us stronger.

If you have not yet completed this survey and would like to, please do so online before the end of next week (Friday 28 September).

Again, thank you to those who have completed the survey. I will communicate the results once they are in.

This survey can be completed online by entering the following url: [https://nsw.tellthemfromme.com/...](https://nsw.tellthemfromme.com/)

Rebecca Webster
Principal
20 September 2018

Parent/carer survey

Last week I sent home a survey to all families. This survey can be completed online. I would really appreciate as many surveys as possible being completed. It is important to our school and to me that our community has a voice. I can assure you that the information gathered will be used to increase the bond and communication between home and school. This information will also inform our planning for next year. I have included the web address in this newsletter.

Normanhurst Boys High School

Tell Them From Me Survey 2018

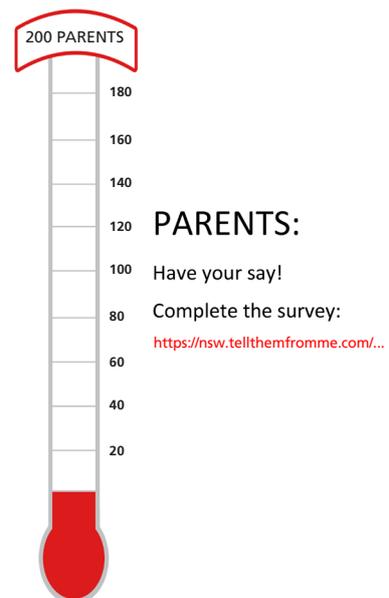
The Tell Them From Me Parent Survey closes on Friday 26th October. At this stage only 3% of parents have completed the survey! It would be marvellous if we could get a few more parents completing it before it closes. The survey aims to help improve student learning outcomes and measures factors that are known to affect academic achievement and other student outcomes. It is also a follow up from the 2015–2017 surveys. This survey will serve as a tool in measuring our progress.

With such a small number of parents completing the survey the results will be unrepresentative and will be of little use. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey. It is often the case that those who are happy with something are less likely to take the time to complete these sorts of surveys. As a consequence the results end up skewed and we have no clue if parents are actually happy with things or would like change to occur. We would greatly appreciate your input via the following link: [https://nsw.tellthemfromme.com/...](https://nsw.tellthemfromme.com/)

Fostering excellence in young men through holistic education

Response counter

Newcastle School



Acknowledgements

The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) would like to thank the principals and school executives of the schools that took part in this research for sharing their time and insights with the *Tell Them From Me* team.