

Frequently Asked Questions About Student Surveys

What is the Tripod Student Survey?

The Tripod student survey is a set of questions developed about students' perception of their classroom experience. It is an expertly-structured, highly-researched, confidential student survey that helps classroom teachers receive vital insights about how well they are reaching students through their instructional practices, classroom environment and student interactions. By understanding more about what students are experiencing, teachers can improve their practices and positively impact student growth and engagement.

How was the survey developed?

The Tripod Student Survey was developed by Dr. Ronald F. Ferguson of Harvard University in collaboration with teachers in 2001 and refined over more than a decade. In the past three years alone, the surveys have been completed by

- 1,994,555 students across
- 144,483 classrooms across
- 6,562 schools, and across
- 33 states

Why and when did TPS start using the Tripod Student Survey?

The profession of teaching, especially in Tulsa Public Schools, requires extensive expertise and continuous professional reflection. Student feedback is a powerful professional learning tool. There is vast and compelling research that student survey results provide valid, reliable and actionable feedback to teachers to assist their growth and validate successes. In short, survey data are powerful complements to other measures of teacher performance data. Students also appreciate the opportunity to provide input and have a voice about their experiences.

TPS piloted the Tripod survey in the spring of 2013. The survey process began a controlled rollout of the student surveys across the District in 2013-2014 to 50% of its schools and teachers. The design and use of the surveys have been coordinated and vetted by Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association (TCTA),

and student surveys are a component of the District's agreement with the Association. TCTA also agreed to their use this year as described below.

How will the survey data be used, and how does it relate to other performance information in the District's Multiple Measures System?

The survey's primary use is for teacher reflection, professional development and a map for improving student learning. Beginning this year, student survey results will also be part of a teacher's evaluation document. District personnel and TCTA have developed a fair way to use this information as one of three evaluation components in a [multiple measures evaluation report](#). As described to all schools' faculty members in [presentations](#) this fall the three components of the system are the [Tulsa Model](#) (principal observation) scores; and where available, [value added information](#) and student survey information. Teachers' value added and student survey information will be reported as being within the average, below average or above average range—not numerical scores with weights.

Note that by using information from the student survey and TPS' value added modeling, the District and TCTA are fulfilling the state requirement to use multiple measures in its evaluation system without adding new work to teachers' or students' plates. In particular, the district is not requiring teachers to create Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) or Student Outcome Objectives (SOOs). Nor does TPS' system require teachers to use assessments or other tools as an "Other Academic Measure" (OAM). These technical terms are defined further in the [Multiple Measures Glossary](#). As a result, TPS teachers will not develop or use tests solely for evaluation purposes. Indeed, the district is not adding one tool or assessment to create its multiple measures system. The District's multiple measures system (which includes the Tulsa Model, value added and student surveys) relies exclusively on preexisting tools and already-required state tests.

Who participates in the survey? Are all teachers and schools participating?

Generally speaking, pursuant to the district's negotiated agreement with its teacher's union (Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association), all K-12 classroom teachers in the district are participating. Teachers only survey ONE class of students—not all students they teach. Students must have been enrolled continuously in a class for at least 4 weeks with the specific teacher in order to complete a survey.

Are the surveys reliable and valid?

Yes. The highest caliber research shows that the instrument is highly reliable and a valid assessment of teacher's impact on student learning. The survey is not a popularity contest, but is composed of rigorously vetted and nationally research-based questions about classroom practice and climate. It must be remembered that an entire class of students are completing the survey and that the students who fill out the surveys spend more time in the classroom with the teacher than anyone else. Because of these facts and the quality of the questions, research finds that the Tripod student survey is often the most reliable assessment of teacher practice. There are controls in place during the processing of the survey answers to guard against careless or inappropriate answering of the surveys.

How do student surveys help students?

Surveys are not just reliable feedback tools, they are also highly predictive of teachers' impact on student achievement growth. Peer reviewed research has repeatedly shown that a teacher's survey performance with one class of students is directly related to the academic growth of other students taught by the same teacher. This means that teachers can use feedback from their survey reports to confirm their success and adjust their practices to improve student learning in all the classes they teach. For example, the Measures of Effective Teaching study of 2010 showed that other students taught by high-performing teachers (teachers who had scored in the top 25% on a student survey administration of a different class of students) dramatically out performed students taught by teachers in the bottom 25%, amounting to **3.7 - 4.8 more months of learning per year in math and 2.3 - 2.9 more months in English Language Arts.**¹ Said another way, the lower performing teachers would need as many as 14.8 months with students in order for them experience the same growth as they would have in just 10 months (one academic year) with the higher performing teacher. This data confirms that students' perception of their classroom experience is a valid indicator of a teacher's ability to reach students.

¹ Links to reliability and validity research are available on pages 4 and 5 of the FAQ document for the public at http://www.tulsaschools.org/2_News/documents/pdf/press_releases/StudentSurveys/StudentSurveysFAQs_141123.pdf.

Predicted differences in months of learning for students taught by teachers performing at the 25th versus 75th percentiles on Tripod Student Surveys

(Estimated using surveys from one class and gains from another class, taught by the same teacher.)

	Predicted difference Per school year*
<i>On state math test</i>	4.8 months
<i>On the Balanced Assessment in Math</i>	3.7 months
<i>On state English Language Arts (ELA) tests</i>	2.3 months
<i>On the Stanford 9 Open Ended ELA</i>	2.9 months

*Based on Table 9, p.26: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, “Learning about Teaching: Initial findings from the Measures of Effective Teaching Project.” December 2010.

What other information is there regarding the reliability and validity of the Tripod survey in the use of teacher evaluation?

The Gates Foundation Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project extensively studied the use of Tripod student surveys. Using a sample of more than 44,500 students, the results of the MET study in December 2010, January 2012 and January 2013 reinforced other research findings that integrating student survey assessment results with high-quality observations and student growth scores on achievement tests creates a much more valid and reliable picture of teacher performance when compared to traditional evaluation practices.

Links to relevant studies regarding the reliability of student surveys and their ability to predict gains in student learning are:

- http://www.metproject.org/downloads/Asking_Students_Practitioner_Brief.pdf
- http://www.metproject.org/downloads/MET_Gathering_Feedback_Practitioner_Brief.pdf
- <http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/Hanover-Research-Student-Surveys.pdf>
- http://www.coloradoedinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Planning_comms_Research-Overview-CEI.pdf
- http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_METMadeSimple_2012.pdf
- http://www.metproject.org/downloads/MET_Ensuring_Fair_and_Reliable_Measures_Practitioner_Brief.pdf
- http://www.metproject.org/downloads/Preliminary_Findings-Research_Paper.pdf

Other Resources:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hinp4-naZzg> (from Pittsburg Public Schools' experience with the survey)

More soon!

Is it the only type of teacher feedback that teachers should receive or will receive in their evaluation?

Absolutely not. **The foundation of teacher feedback in TPS in the Tulsa Model**—the principal observation—as the principal is the instructional leader and the teacher’s coach. Indeed, TPS teachers and administrators wrote its instructional framework (rubric) together! The student survey is not used as an evaluation tool. It is, however, high-quality perception information that complements and informs a teacher’s evaluation—which now has multiple points of information as described above.

What do the surveys measure?

The surveys measure classroom practices and climate as experienced by students. The Tripod Project identifies seven elements of teaching practices — the 7Cs — that correspond to key elements of teaching quality. These elements of teaching practice closely align with Tulsa Public School’s instructional framework (the Tulsa Model for Teacher Observation & Evaluation). Teacher performance on the survey is correlated with student achievement growth and teacher performance on their Tulsa Model observations.

What are the 7Cs?

The 7Cs are constructs for measuring teaching practices: Care, Control, Clarify, Challenge, Captivate, Confer and Consolidate—aspects of teaching supported by decades of research and peer reviewed publications.

1. Care –show concern and support
2. Control –sustain order, respect and focus
3. Clarify –cultivate understanding & overcome confusion
4. Challenge –press for rigor and persistence
5. Captivate –inspire curiosity and interest
6. Confer –invite ideas and promote discussion
7. Consolidate –integrate ideas and summarize key points

How are survey items appropriate for the development level of the students?

The questions differ by grade level. There is a K-2 (early elementary) instrument, an upper elementary instrument and a secondary instrument. The surveys are shorter and the items are more simply stated in K-2 and upper elementary grades. Guided by their experience with the survey's administration since the spring of 2013, Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association (the District's teachers' union) vetted all questions, causing some questions to be removed when there were concerns. They also assisted the District in paring down the number of survey items. The District will continuously improve the survey and its administration with TCTA's assistance over the coming months. This winter, with regard to the early elementary survey, the study group of TPS teachers reviewing the use of student surveys overwhelmingly recommended that the District continue with the K-2 student surveys.

How many questions or survey items are there per survey format?

- Early Elementary (K-2): 16 survey items / 8 student background and engagement items
- Upper Elementary (3-5): 28 survey items / 20 student background and engagement items
- Secondary (6-12): 35 survey items / 19 student background and engagement items

*Survey items are those questions that "count" toward the teacher's report. See information below regarding why student background and engagement items are used.

How are students asked the questions? What about non-readers and struggling readers?

In grades 3-12, most questions on the survey are answered using a 5-point scale (Totally Untrue to Totally True). In K-2, there is a 3-point scale (No, Maybe/Sometimes and Yes).

Teachers are instructed to clarify questions for the students. If students do not read or simply struggle with reading, a proctor (other than the teacher) reads the questions to them. In K-2 settings, proctors must read the questions to students and are encouraged to work with small groups students (typically 5 students) at a time, as necessary. They may also assist the students in "bubbling in" the survey items as necessary. The survey is available in Spanish and English.

What accommodations can be made for students with special needs participating in the survey?

Specific accommodations for students with special needs are determined at the school and teacher level. In some situations, the disabilities of students will exempt them from participation in the survey.

What are the survey items?

Examples from the Upper Elementary survey format are included below:

CARE

- I like the way my teacher treats me when I need help.
- My teacher is nice to me when I ask questions.
- My teacher in this class makes me feel that he/she really cares about me.

CONTROL

- Our class stays busy and does not waste time.
- Students behave so badly in this class that it slows down our learning.

CLARIFY

- My teacher checks to make sure we understand what he/she is teaching us.
- When he/she is teaching us, my teacher asks us whether we understand.
- My teacher knows when the class understands, and when we do not.
- In this class, we learn to correct our mistakes.

CHALLENGE

- In this class, we learn a lot almost every day.
- My teacher pushes everybody to work hard.
- In our class, it is okay to stop trying.
- My teacher pushes us to think hard about things we read.
- My teacher makes sure that I try to do my best.
- When something is hard for me, my teacher still makes me learn it

CAPTIVATE

- School work is interesting.
- I like the ways we learn things in this class.
- In this class, learning is slow, boring and not much fun. (Do you agree?)
- I like the way my teacher treats me when I need help.

CONFER

- My teacher wants us to share our thoughts.
- In this class, we get to make enough choices.
- Students speak up and share their ideas about class work.
- My teacher wants me to explain my answers -- why I think what I think.
- My teacher takes the time to summarize what we learn each day.

CONSOLIDATE

- My teacher takes the time to summarize what we learn each day.
- My teacher takes time to help us remember what we learn.
- To help us remember, my teacher talks about things that we already learned.

How long does the survey take to complete? When do teachers get the results so they can review and respond to the feedback?

Usually, 30 minutes is more than ample time to complete the entire process for the survey at the upper elementary and secondary level, including material distribution and instructions. When best practices are used in administering the survey in Kindergarten or first grade, the administration requires 20 to 30 minutes of student time per small group, as proctors are typically working with students in small groups.

Student survey results are also quickly available and highly actionable. These facts are key considering that the survey results are highly correlated with student growth scores and principals' observation scores. Student growth data like value added takes months to receive, whereas teachers receive their detailed Tripod student survey performance reports approximately four weeks after the survey window closes. The teachers' reports are provided to them on an individualized secured (confidential) link. The information in the report allows teachers to quickly confirm their success and identify areas for growth, on both an aggregate and item-level basis. This data is a confidential personnel record.

Why are there student background and engagement questions on the survey?

Anonymous student background questions assist researchers in making the results more reliable and fair by allowing them to control for demographic and mindset factors if they influence (bias) the results. The few "engagement" questions are for TPS research purposes. All surveys are answered anonymously and all individual answers to the survey are confidential. Examples of student background survey items used in the fall and spring administration include:

Early Elementary (K-2)

- Are you a boy or girl?
- Is there a computer at your house?
- Does your family speak English at home?

Upper Elementary

- What grade are you in? (Select one choice)
- When you were younger, what kind of grades (or marks) did you usually get in school?
- What adults do you live with? (Mark all that are true for you) — from a list of relatives and or guardians.

Secondary

- What is the final grade you think you will get in this class? (select one choice) from a list of grades.
- What was your grade point average last term for all of your classes? (select one choice) from a list of grades.
- I have a place outside of school where I can use the Internet anytime I need to.

Before the spring administration of the survey, the District and TCTA reviewed stakeholder input on the advisability of using these anonymous student background questions and there was overwhelming support for their continued use.

Who scores the survey and how is it scored?

Cambridge Education processes and scores Tripod survey results and creates all reports. Teacher performance (a teacher's score) is carefully calculated (at an aggregate and question level basis) by comparing it against other teachers in the District teaching similar classes and students.

What happens if a teacher receives a below average student survey rating?

We hope that teachers examine specific results, along with their principals' observation data, and work with them to develop strategies to improve their practices and classroom environment. There is no rigid weight to the student survey information on the report. It is simply information that makes the overall evaluation more complete, reliable and predictive of student achievement growth.

How is student confidentiality protected?

Students answer anonymously. They are provided with a blank, sealable envelope with their survey. Students place their surveys in their envelopes and then seal them before the surveys are collected. Student identities are protected and not shared with the teachers or administrators.

Is the survey on paper or online?

The questions are paper-pencil assessments so as not to tie up the use of computers in the schools.

When were the survey windows?

The survey was administered this fall from Nov. 3 through Nov. 21. The spring administration window was February 23 through March 4. This year, the better of the two survey reports will be used to determine the information on the teacher's multiple measures report.

Will parents have the opportunity to review the survey?

Yes. Hard copies of the Tripod student surveys are on file at the Education Service Center's Office of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness. Electronic copies of the surveys used this are also available:

[Early Elementary English](#) and [Early Elementary Spanish](#)

[Upper Elementary English](#) and [Upper Elementary Spanish](#)

[Secondary English](#) and [Secondary Spanish](#)

This [survey detail document](#) shows which survey questions used in the fall administration were survey items that counted toward teachers' results, and which did not because they were background or engagement questions, as discussed above.

Will individual teacher survey information be made publicly available?

No. Data for individual teachers is considered confidential personnel information. No identifiable information will be released publicly. Data will be made available to the appropriate school and District leadership.

Where can I find more information about the Tripod Project and Tripod student survey?

More information on Tripod can be found at www.tripodproject.org. The Tripod student survey was studied by the national Measures of Effective Teaching Research Project. Research information and results are available at www.metproject.org and specific links to research briefs are found above. Or, please feel free to call the District's Office of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness or TCTA.