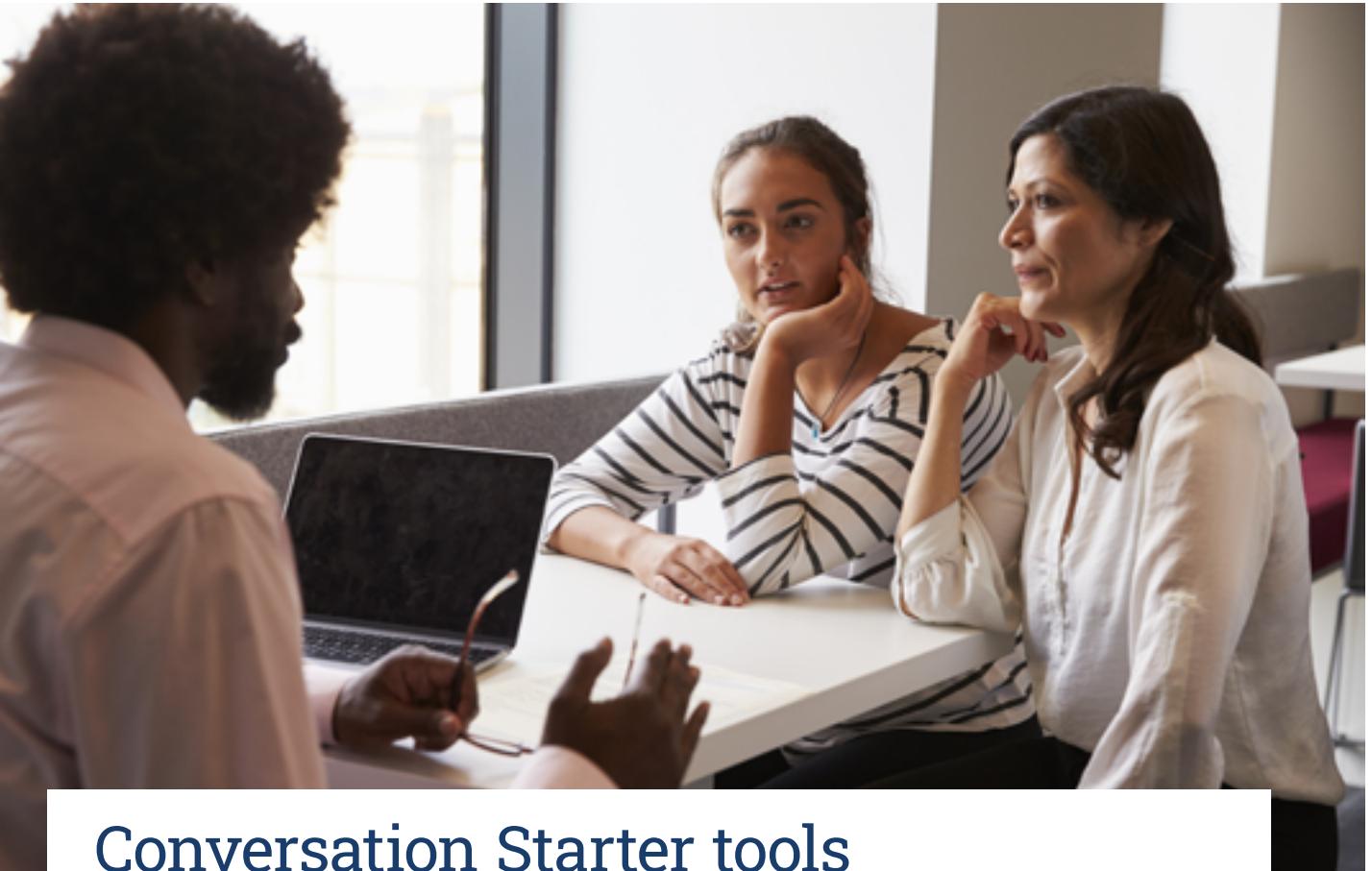




CONVERSATION STARTER TOOLS

BROOKINGS

September 2021



Conversation Starter tools

These Conversation Starter tools are a part of [Collaborating to transform and improve education systems: A playbook for family-school engagement](#) by the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at Brookings.¹ In addition to these tools, the playbook provides context on the goals of family-school engagement and its evolving nature, a map for understanding types of family-school engagement strategies, an interactive database of strategies from around the world that emerged both prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic, and findings from CUE's survey research on parent and teacher beliefs about what makes a good-quality education. The Conversation Starter tools help you better understand how different stakeholder groups in your school, jurisdiction, or community envision quality education. The tools also help guide you on running a collective discussion with these different stakeholders on their views. CUE argues this is a first step toward developing family-school alignment on educational beliefs and values, and that this coherence is a powerful driver of education system transformation.

For more information on how to use the tools, [watch this short video](#).

¹ The suggested citation for this document is: Winthrop, R., Ziegler, L., & Ershadi, M. (2021). "Conversation Starter tools." The Brookings Institution. [Brookings.edu/familyengagement](https://www.brookings.edu/familyengagement)

The tools include:

- 1. A contextualization checklist of the steps for adapting the tools to a specific context and to other actors.**
- 2. A short parent survey that can also be adapted to other stakeholders, such as students.**
- 3. A short teacher survey that can also be adapted to other stakeholders, such as school administrators and employers.**
- 4. Conversation starter analysis and discussion guide**

The tools are for anyone who hopes to better understand the perspectives of one or more education stakeholder groups. Users of the tools may include school leaders, jurisdiction leaders, leaders of school networks, teacher organizations, parent organizations, and civil society organizations working with schools to support education change.

The tools can help you identify:

- ✍ the most important purpose of school for each stakeholder group;
- ✍ the aspects of a child's educational experience that each stakeholder group most relies on to assess what makes a "good school";
- ✍ the types of teaching and learning experiences each stakeholder group prefers;
- ✍ the actors that each stakeholder group relies on to inform their beliefs about education; and
- ✍ the level of trust and alignment felt between stakeholder groups.

The tools are prototypes developed through the dialogue with CUE's Family Engagement in Education Network (FEEN) members and drawn from surveys of close to 25,000 parents and more than 6,000 teachers around the world. We encourage you to try the tools and share feedback at leapfrogging@brookings.edu. Your input will help us further develop internationally validated tools for diagnosing alignment between communities and schools.

DEFINITIONS

Parent and family: The term “parent” is used as shorthand for any family member, caregiver, or guardian who cares for children and youth. CUE often uses the terms “parent” and “family” interchangeably. In your surveys, we encourage you to use the language that resonates best with your community.

Teacher: We use the term “teacher” instead of “educator” to distinguish between the education professional (whose vocation is to instruct and guide children in school) and parents (who are their child’s first educators, helping them develop and learn from birth on).

Involvement versus engagement: We find Ferlazzo’s distinction between family “involvement” and “engagement” helpful and use the terms accordingly. “A school striving for family involvement often leads with its mouth—identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can contribute.” In contrast, “a school striving for parent engagement leads with its ears—listening to what parents think, dream, and worry about. The goal of family engagement is not to serve clients but to gain partners” (Ferlazzo, 2011, p. 12).

Family-school engagement: We use the term “family-school engagement” instead of the more common “family engagement” not only to express the dual nature of the engagement but also to highlight the fact that either side can, and does, initiate the engagement process.

Alignment and the alignment gap: When families and schools share the same vision of the purpose of school, they are aligned in their beliefs and values, and this coherence is a powerful driver of education system transformation. An “alignment gap” exists when families and schools either do not share or perceive that they do not share the same views on the purpose of school and therefore what makes for a quality education for their children and communities.

✓ 1. CONTEXTUALIZATION CHECKLIST

Before using the survey tools, you need to make the key decisions outlined in the following checklist.

1. DETERMINE HOW YOU WILL USE THE SURVEY TOOLS.

Conducting these surveys should first and foremost serve your own internal purpose of diagnosing alignment. In addition, you may also be interested in learning how your school, jurisdiction, or community compares to others in CUE's study.

Why are you conducting this survey?

- For the internal purpose of diagnosing alignment
- To view my data in relation to the data of others
- Other

If you are interested in viewing your data in relation to other communities' data, and in sharing your de-identified survey data with CUE and with other communities for their own learning purposes, contact us at leapfrogging@brookings.edu. If you do decide to be a part of our study, we ask that you keep your survey changes to basic contextualization only so that results can be easily compared across schools, jurisdictions, and communities. CUE's FEEN members have often expressed the value of seeing how their data compares to the data of others.

2. CHOOSE THE STAKEHOLDER GROUPS YOU WILL INCLUDE.

The current survey tools include surveys for parents and teachers. However, you can adapt either tool for other stakeholder groups. Decide who you want to get perspectives from and engage in a dialogue.

Which stakeholder groups do you want to survey?

- Parents
- Teachers
- Students
- Administrators
- Community leaders
- Employers
- Other

3. DETERMINE THE LANGUAGE(S) YOU WILL OFFER THE SURVEY IN.

The language(s) you will offer the survey in should be based on the context of your community. CUE has translations of the parent and teacher survey tools available in several languages that we can share with you. If your language is not listed here, consider looking for a professional translator in your community who does back-translation to test the accuracy of the wording. For any translation, make sure to ask several people who speak the chosen language to take the survey to ensure it is clearly worded.

CUE has the parent survey available in:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Afrikaans | <input type="radio"/> French | <input type="radio"/> Spanish |
| <input type="radio"/> American English | <input type="radio"/> Haitian Creole | <input type="radio"/> Swahili |
| <input type="radio"/> Arabic | <input type="radio"/> Hindi | <input type="radio"/> Vietnamese |
| <input type="radio"/> British English | <input type="radio"/> Mandarin | <input type="radio"/> Xhosa |
| <input type="radio"/> Farsi | <input type="radio"/> Marathi | <input type="radio"/> Portuguese |

CUE has the teacher survey available in:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> American English | <input type="radio"/> Marathi | <input type="radio"/> Arabic |
| <input type="radio"/> British English | <input type="radio"/> Spanish | |
| <input type="radio"/> Hindi | <input type="radio"/> Portuguese | |

4. DECIDE HOW YOU WILL ADMINISTER THE SURVEY.

Based on your context, consider which channels and methods of communication will let you best reach your stakeholder group(s). You may also wish to encourage participation by offering a small monetary incentive such as a phone credit top up or gift card. Studies have shown that incentives, especially ones that are prepaid, cash, and larger (versus smaller) payments, help increase survey engagement and response rates (Church, 1993; Signer et al., 1999). You could offer a smaller incentive to all participants or a single larger incentive that will be given away via a random lottery. Take your budget into consideration regarding not only the incentives themselves but also the distribution process for any incentives once the survey is complete.

How will you administer the survey?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Online only | <input type="radio"/> Phone call only |
| <input type="radio"/> SMS only | <input type="radio"/> Other |

Will you offer an incentive for completing the survey?

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|

If yes, who will receive an incentive?

- Every survey respondent Lottery winner(s)

5. ADAPT THE TOOLS TO YOUR COMMUNITY.

The survey questions should be adapted to suit your context. Steps for adapting the tools:

- ✍ Read the survey tools thoroughly.
- ✍ Fill in the blanks in the introduction's suggested text.
- ✍ Decide if you will change the reason why you are asking people to take the survey in the introductory text.
- ✍ Adapt the wording of questions and responses to ensure your stakeholder groups will understand what you are asking. You may need to adjust the terms used to refer to grade levels to the terms most commonly used in your context. Adding clarifying examples in parentheses to the response choices may be helpful. Note where we indicate on the survey tools that edits are welcome versus where we discourage edits for rigor or survey design reasons.
- ✍ Update wording on your survey to reflect how you will distribute it (e.g., online, via SMS, or via phone). The survey tools provided below are in an online format.
- ✍ Ensure any material changes take into consideration how you plan to analyze the data. For example, regarding questions related to the purpose of education, the current wording asks respondents to select their top choice only. If you are interested in analyzing respondents' second, third, and fourth choices, you may wish to make this a ranking question instead.

6. DETERMINE IF RESPONSES WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL OR NOT. Schools and jurisdictions that regularly survey parents or teachers may be used to asking for parents' or teachers' names and information. However, parents and teachers will be more likely to answer openly and honestly if the survey is confidential. Though confidentiality adds a layer of complexity, it can be well worth it.

If you choose to keep the surveys confidential, you will need to define a plan to secure respondents' data. Protecting the identities and data collected from research respondents who have been promised confidentiality is of utmost importance. To follow ethical standards and to protect respondents' confidentiality, all respondents must consent to participating in the research by manually or virtually signing a consent form before beginning the survey. All data must be secured in password-protected files, and only staff directly involved in the study should have access to the data. All data should also be

de-identified, which means that any identifying information (e.g., respondents' names or contact information) should be removed from the dataset.

If you wish to participate in CUE's study and to view results of other jurisdictions, please contact us so we can discuss data-protection requirements and necessary language to add to the introduction on confidentiality of responses.

7. TEST YOUR SURVEY BEFORE SHARING IT. Before sharing your survey with your stakeholder group(s), conduct a small pilot. In other words, test your survey on a few people with diverse backgrounds from your target stakeholder group(s). For example, to test the parent survey, seek out parents with children of different ages, with different socio-economic backgrounds, and with different cultural backgrounds to get a cross section. Ask your pilot participants not to share the survey with others. Through this process, you can collect feedback on any confusing wording and on how long it should take to complete the survey. Make any final edits that are needed before sending the tool out.

Generally, a pilot sample should be about 10 percent of the size of the total survey sample you plan on recruiting; for example, if your final survey sample will include 100 people, your pilot sample would ideally include 10 people (Hertzog, 2008). However, if it is not possible to recruit a sufficiently large pilot sample, ask as many parents as possible to take the survey so you get some feedback. Include your pilot data in your final survey data only if you do not make any changes to your survey after the pilot; if your pilot survey text differs from your final survey, do not include pilot data in your final survey data.

Steps for piloting your survey:

- 1.** Find diverse respondents from your stakeholder group(s) to complete the survey pilot.
- 2.** Determine how many days you will give respondents to complete the survey pilot (we recommend 7-10 days).
- 3.** Make final edits to the survey based on pilot feedback.

✓ 2. PARENT SURVEY

Online survey for parents in American English

[Edit the following sample survey as needed. Note that the Parent Survey could be easily adapted for students. If you plan to participate in our study, please contact us at leapfrogging@brookings.edu so we can discuss the necessary language to add to the introduction on confidentiality of responses.]

Conversation starter survey: What are your beliefs about education?

Introduction

We are interested in learning about your beliefs about education. We are asking parents to complete this survey to help us develop better family–school communication and collaboration.

This survey will take approximately ___ minutes to complete. Please submit your completed survey by _____.

This survey should be completed by the child’s primary caregiver (i.e., the adult who assumes the most responsibility in caring for the health and well-being of the child). Please complete this survey by focusing on your oldest child enrolled in school (preschool to grade 12). If you have more than one child, we welcome you to complete this survey again for each additional child.

We will share the collective responses with you once the survey has been completed.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Sincerely,

[Insert name of school or leader sending out the survey.]

[Note that is important to ask parents to focus on one child per survey as their perspective may be different depending on the child.]

Please answer the following questions by focusing on your oldest child enrolled in school (preschool to grade 12).

 **Q1. In which grade is your oldest child who is enrolled in school (preschool to grade 12)?**

- Preschool (typically 4-5 years old)
- Kindergarten (typically 5-6 years old)
- Grade 1 (typically 6-7 years old)
- Grade 2 (typically 7-8 years old)
- Grade 3 (typically 8-9 years old)
- Grade 4 (typically 9-10 years old)
- Grade 5 (typically 10-11 years old)
- Grade 6 (typically 11-12 years old)
- Grade 7 (typically 12-13 years old)
- Grade 8 (typically 13-14 years old)
- Grade 9 (typically 14-15 years old)
- Grade 10 (typically 15-16 years old)
- Grade 11 (typically 16-17 years old)
- Grade 12 (typically 17-18 years old)

[For Questions 2 and 4, if you are interested in analyzing respondents' second, third, and fourth choices, you may wish to make these ranking questions instead.]

 **Q2. I believe that the most important purpose of school is:**

- To prepare students for post-secondary education (i.e. college or university) through rigorous content knowledge across all academic subjects.
- To prepare students with the skills and competencies needed for the workforce.
- To prepare students to be good citizens who are prepared to lead their political and civic lives.
- To help students gain self-knowledge, find their personal sense of purpose, and better understand their values.
- Other (please specify):

 **Q3. I am satisfied with my child's education when my child is:**

Please rank from 1 for most satisfied to 6 for least satisfied.

- Getting good scores on state/national standardized tests
- Achieving at or above grade level
- Being prepared for post-secondary education (i.e. college or university)
- Developing friendships and social skills
- Being given opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities aligned to their interests
- Enjoying school

 **Q4. I believe that my child's teachers believe that the most important purpose of school is:**

- To prepare students for post-secondary education (i.e. college or university) through rigorous content knowledge across all academic subjects.
- To prepare students with the skills and competencies needed for the workforce.
- To prepare students to be good citizens who are prepared to lead their political and civic lives.
- To help students gain self-knowledge, find their personal sense of purpose, and better understand their values.
- Other (please specify):

 **Q5. I believe that my child's school administrators (e.g. school leaders, government or organization education leaders) believe that the most important purpose of school is:**

- To prepare students for post-secondary education (i.e. college or university) through rigorous content knowledge across all academic subjects.
- To prepare students with the skills and competencies needed for the workforce.
- To prepare students to be good citizens who are prepared to lead their political and civic lives.
- To help students gain self-knowledge, find their personal sense of purpose, and better understand their values.
- Other (please specify):

 **Q6. I believe that my child's teachers are satisfied with their students' education when their students are:**

Please rank from 1 for most satisfied to 6 for least satisfied.

- Getting good scores on state/national standardized tests
- Achieving at or above grade level
- Being prepared for post-secondary education (i.e. college or university)
- Developing friendships and social skills
- Being given opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities aligned to their interests
- Enjoying school

 **Q7. I believe that my child's school administrators (e.g. school leaders, government or organization education leaders) are satisfied with their students' education when their students are:**

Please rank from 1 for most satisfied to 6 for least satisfied.

- Getting good scores on state/national standardized tests
- Achieving at or above grade level
- Being prepared for post-secondary education (i.e. college or university)
- Developing friendships and social skills
- Being given opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities aligned to their interests
- Enjoying school

 **Q8. My child's teachers are receptive to my input and suggestions.**

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

0

1

2

3

4

5

 **Q9. You are helping a friend choose a school for her 10-year-old child. She can send her child to one of two schools and you go with her to visit both schools.**

In one school you see:

Children are sitting in a classroom in rows of desks facing the front of the class and taking notes while listening to the teacher who is standing at the front of the room reviewing course material.

In the other school you see:

Children are in a classroom sitting in small groups facing each other and working together on a class project. The teacher is walking around the room answering questions the children have.

Which school would you suggest that your friend chooses to send her child to?

- First School - Children are sitting in a classroom in rows of desks facing the front of the class and taking notes while listening to the teacher who is standing at the front of the room reviewing course material.
- Second School - Children are in a classroom sitting in small groups facing each other and working together on a class project. The teacher is walking around the room answering questions the children have.

 **Q10. My child's teachers share my beliefs about what makes a good education.**

Strongly disagree					Strongly agree
0	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

 **Q11. What influences your perspective about what makes for a good quality education for your child?**

Please rank from 1 for most influential to 9 for least influential.

- The criteria required for admission into college/university
- The opinions of other parents
- The media
- Scientific findings from fields such as psychology, the learning sciences, sociology, etc.
- The opinions of my elected officials
- The opinions of my child
- The opinions of my education community leaders (e.g., school administrators, district directors, policymakers)
- The opinions of my child's educators (e.g., teachers and paraprofessional educators)
- The opinions of my civil society leaders (e.g., faith-based community leaders, nongovernmental organizations, grassroots community groups)

 **Q12. What is your highest level of education attained?**

- Less than a high school diploma
- High school diploma or equivalency
- Some college, no degree
- Vocational training/2-year college degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Post-graduate (e.g., Master's degree, professional degree)
- I prefer not to respond
- Other (please specify):

 **Q13. What gender do you identify with?**

- Female
- Male
- Other (please specify):
- I prefer not to respond

✓ 3. TEACHER SURVEY

Online survey for teachers in American English

[Edit the following sample survey as needed. Note that the Teacher Survey could be easily adapted for school administrators or employers. If you plan to participate in our study, please contact us at leapfrogging@brookings.edu so we can discuss the necessary language to add to the introduction on confidentiality of responses.]

Conversation starter survey: What are your beliefs about education?

Introduction

We are interested in learning about your beliefs about education. We are asking teachers to complete this survey to help us develop better family–school communication and collaboration.

This survey will take approximately ____ minutes to complete. Please submit the completed survey by _____.

Please only complete this survey if you are currently working as a preschool through grade 12 teacher. If you teach multiple grades, please focus only on your experience with the oldest students you currently teach.

We will share the collective responses with you once the survey has been completed.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Sincerely,

[Insert name of school or leader sending out the survey]

[Note that is important to ask teachers to focus on their oldest students (if they teach more than one grade) as their perspective may be different depending on the age of their students.]

✍ Q1. In which grade are the oldest students you currently teach?

- Preschool (typically 4-5 years old)
- Kindergarten (typically 5-6 years old)
- Grade 1 (typically 6-7 years old)
- Grade 2 (typically 7-8 years old)
- Grade 3 (typically 8-9 years old)
- Grade 4 (typically 9-10 years old)
- Grade 5 (typically 10-11 years old)
- Grade 6 (typically 11-12 years old)
- Grade 7 (typically 12-13 years old)
- Grade 8 (typically 13-14 years old)
- Grade 9 (typically 14-15 years old)
- Grade 10 (typically 15-16 years old)
- Grade 11 (typically 16-17 years old)
- Grade 12 (typically 17-18 years old)

[For Questions 2 and 4, if you are interested in analyzing respondents' second, third, and fourth choices, you may wish to make these ranking questions instead.]

✍ Q2. I believe that the most important purpose of school is:

- To prepare students for post-secondary education (i.e. college or university) through rigorous content knowledge across all academic subjects.
- To prepare students with the skills and competencies needed for the workforce.
- To prepare students to be good citizens who are prepared to lead their political and civic lives.
- To help students gain self-knowledge, find their personal sense of purpose, and better understand their values.
- Other (please specify):

✍ Q3. I am satisfied with my students' education when my students are:

Please rank from 1 for most satisfied to 6 for least satisfied.

- Getting good scores on provincial/national standardized tests
- Achieving at or above grade level
- Being prepared for post-secondary education (i.e. college or university)
- Developing friendships and social skills
- Being given opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities aligned to their interests
- Enjoying school

 **Q4. I believe that my students' parents believe that the most important purpose of school is:**

- To prepare students for post-secondary education (i.e. college or university) through rigorous content knowledge across all academic subjects.
- To prepare students with the skills and competencies needed for the workforce.
- To prepare students to be good citizens who are prepared to lead their political and civic lives.
- To help students gain self-knowledge, find their personal sense of purpose, and better understand their values.
- Other (please specify):

 **Q5. I believe that my school administrators (e.g. school leaders, government or organization education leaders) believe that the most important purpose of school is:**

- To prepare students for post-secondary education (i.e. college or university) through rigorous content knowledge across all academic subjects.
- To prepare students with the skills and competencies needed for the workforce.
- To prepare students to be good citizens who are prepared to lead their political and civic lives.
- To help students gain self-knowledge, find their personal sense of purpose, and better understand their values.
- Other (please specify):

 **Q6. I believe that my students' parents are satisfied with their children's education when their children are:**

Please rank from 1 for most satisfied to 6 for least satisfied.

- Getting good scores on provincial/national standardized tests
- Achieving at or above grade level
- Being prepared for post-secondary education (i.e. college or university)
- Developing friendships and social skills
- Being given opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities aligned to their interests
- Enjoying school

 **Q10. What influences your perspective about what makes for a good quality education for your students?**

Please rank from 1 for most influential to 11 for least influential.

- The assigned curriculum and/or learning benchmarks
- The criteria required for students to gain admission into college / university
- The opinions of other teachers
- The media
- Scientific findings from fields such as psychology, the learning sciences, sociology, etc.
- The opinions of my elected officials
- The opinions of my education community leaders (e.g., school administrators, district directors, policymakers)
- The opinions of my students' parents
- The opinions of my students
- The opinions of my civil society leaders (e.g., faith-based community leaders, nongovernmental organizations, grassroots community groups)
- Professional developmental seminars

 **Q11. What is your highest level of education attained?**

- Less than a high school diploma
- High school diploma or equivalency
- Some college, no degree
- Vocational training/2-year college degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Post-graduate (e.g., Master's degree, professional degree)
- I prefer not to respond
- Other (please specify):

 **Q12. What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male
- Other (please specify):
- I prefer not to respond

✓ 4. CONVERSATION STARTER ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

We recommend the following steps to analyze your survey results. These steps will help you to understand the degree of alignment or misalignment among stakeholders. Any question numbers mentioned below refer to the questions in the Parent Survey tool.

- 1. Calculate the percent of responses for each question.** This percentage is the number of responses per answer choice divided by the total number of responses for a given question. For example, if 60 out of 150 parents selected answer choice A, the percentage for that answer choice would be 40%. If 50 out of 150 parents selected answer choice B, the percentage would be 33%. If you conducted your survey through an online platform, these calculations may be automatically done for you.
- 2. Look at the ranges.** The ranges are the minimum and maximum values for each response. For example, consider Q8: "My child's teachers are receptive to my input and suggestions." Answer choices for this question range from 0 to 5. How many parents responded at the bottom of the range, at 0 or 1? How many responded at the top of the range, at 4 or 5? The range, especially when you have sorted your data in ascending order, can indicate where the majority of parents fall on a spectrum.
- 3. Look at the distributions.** Whereas range focuses on the most extreme responses, distribution concerns all selected responses. Distribution is especially important for questions about child's age (Q1) and parent's education level (Q12). These two questions should have a wide distribution to ensure that your survey respondents are generally representative of your population of interest. For example, have parents from all education levels responded to your survey, or do your respondents include only parents with higher education levels? If the latter, does this distribution correspond to the characteristics of all the parents in your community? If not, you have captured responses only from the most advantaged parents and you will not have gathered all perspectives.
- 4. Start to engage with the responses on a qualitative level.** After reviewing percentages, ranges, and distributions, you can start to group response options in order to understand trends in your data.

For example, consider Q11: "What influences your perspective about what makes for a good quality education for your child?" You will notice there are

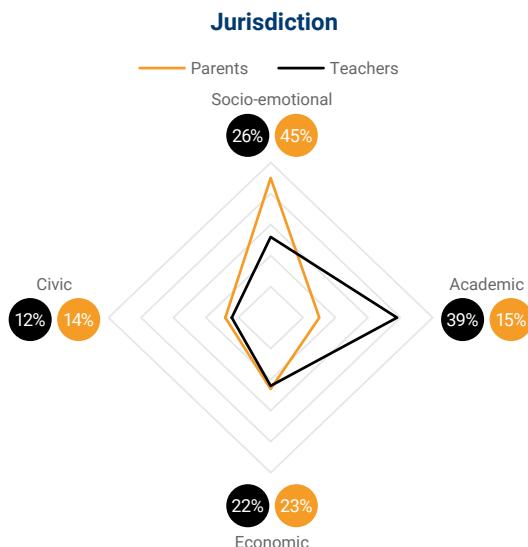
nine answer choices. However, you can group these according to your interests. Looking at the sources' proximity to parents may be helpful. "Close" sources to a parent would be the opinions of other parents; the opinions of the child; the opinions of the child's educators; the opinions of education community leaders (e.g., school administrators, district directors, policymakers); and the opinions of civil society leaders. "Far" sources would be the criteria required for admission into college/university; the media; scientific findings from fields such as psychology, the learning sciences, sociology, etc.; and the opinions of elected officials. Another possibility would be to break the answer choices into academic and non-academic sources.

Take Q3 as another example: "I am satisfied with my students' education when my students are: [...]" The responses in this case could be divided into academic versus well-being indicators. Academic indicators are earning good scores on provincial/national standardized tests; achieving at or above grade level; and being prepared for post-secondary education (i.e., college or university). Wellbeing indicators are developing friendships and social skills; being given opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities aligned to their interests; and enjoying school.

- 5. Visualize the data.** One way to visualize data is to create simple bar graphs. In the example of Q11 above, creating a bar graph could reveal how many respondents selected "close" versus "far" sources as main influencers.

However, another meaningful way to visualize data is to create radar charts, or what CUE calls 'belief maps.' This type of graphic can depict how stakeholders view the purpose of education and their perceptions of others' beliefs about the purpose of education. Tutorials are freely available online for how to make a radar chart in Excel.

The example radar chart below depicts parents' responses to CUE's survey in a FEEN jurisdiction. The radar chart shows that while most parents feel the primary purpose of education is socio-emotional (orange diamond skewed toward the top), most parents simultaneously perceive that teachers believe the primary purpose of education is academic (black diamond skewed toward the right). The radar chart clearly reveals the misalignment between parents' own beliefs and their perceptions of teachers' beliefs. Conducting the survey among teachers and producing a second radar chart could offer invaluable insight into the teachers' beliefs and their perceptions of parents' beliefs. We have often found through surveys that parents and teachers perceive each other's beliefs to be more different than they really are.



A note about the radar chart: The response to *help students gain self-knowledge* pertains to a socio-emotional purpose of education; *to prepare students for post-secondary education* pertains to an academic purpose; *to ensure students can succeed in the workforce* pertains to an economic purpose; and *to guide students toward becoming good citizens* pertains to a civic purpose.

For additional ways to analyze your survey data, see the [background paper](#) that discussed CUE's parent and teacher surveys in several of the FEEN jurisdictions as well as our [Know Your Parents report](#). The former will be particularly useful if you have access to statistical data analysis tools like SPSS or R.

- 6. Discussion of results.** Once you have analyzed the data, we recommend sharing your results with the survey respondents. Perhaps one of the best approaches to sharing results is to conduct an open meeting with the stakeholder groups who took the survey. In this case, that would mean gathering parents and teachers together to discuss the results and the reasons behind alignment or alignment gaps. Surveys will give you quantitative information about your population and some insights into trends—surveys answer what is going on. However, conversations with stakeholders can reveal much more about why respondents selected certain answers. These survey tools are designed to start conversations in your school community about different stakeholder groups' vision of a quality education for children.

Survey results can also be used for internal reflection by school leaders and staff. For example, when we analyzed the data in one of our FEEN jurisdictions, we noticed that less educated parents were more likely to have higher levels of trust

in their child's teachers, whereas more educated parents were more likely to have lower levels of trust. Through discussion, we learned that the jurisdiction had created several programs to make newcomer and immigrant families, who often have lower education levels, feel welcome, such as by delivering welcome packets and translating materials into families' native languages. The discussion was eye opening for the jurisdiction, who received indication that their efforts to engage these families were likely working but that higher income parents were feeling left behind.

The following sample discussion questions could help start the conversation on your survey findings, regardless of whether the results are only for internal reflection or also for broader community dialogue. These questions are framed largely in response to the Parent Survey, but some discussion questions are included assuming teachers were also surveyed. You can and should adjust these questions for all of your stakeholder groups.

Discussion questions:

- 1.** Is there anything about the survey responses that surprised you?
- 2.** How do you determine what you want from education?
- 3.** Are you surprised by the belief maps of teachers and administrators on the most important purpose of school?
- 4.** Why do you think parents and teachers have [similar/different] beliefs about the most important purpose of school?
- 5.** Why do you think parents and teachers have [similar/different] perceptions of each other's beliefs about the most important purpose of school?
- 6.** Why do you think most parents in our community report [academic/well-being] aspects of education as their main indicators of quality?
- 7.** Why do you think most parents in our community support [innovative/traditional] types of pedagogy?
- 8.** Why do you feel parents report that they [are/are not] aligned with teachers' beliefs around the purpose of education?
- 9.** Why do you feel parents report that their children's teachers [are/are not] receptive to their inputs?
- 10.** Findings from CUE's FEEN jurisdiction parent survey data show that when parents feel heard (i.e., when teachers are in fact receptive to parents' input and suggestions), parents also tend to have positive perceptions. Namely, parents report believing that their children are performing well academically, that their children are happier with their education, that they themselves have greater satisfaction with their

children's education overall, and that teachers share their beliefs about schooling. Do the findings from your jurisdiction map onto CUE's findings? Or are there aspects of the responses in your jurisdiction that are dissimilar to what CUE found?

- 11.** Findings from CUE's FEEN jurisdiction parent and teacher survey data show that in many jurisdictions, parents and teachers share similar beliefs about the most important purpose of school and indicators of quality. However, neither stakeholder group perceives this to be true; that is, each group believes the other group has different goals for education and indicators of quality. Do the findings from your jurisdiction map onto CUE's findings, or are there aspects from the responses given from parents in your jurisdiction that are dissimilar to what CUE found?

Once the survey data has been thoroughly discussed, you and your stakeholder groups can decide what steps you might want to take next. These steps may include creating an action plan to close alignment gaps, such as by committing to regular discussions about the purpose of education with all stakeholder groups and adjusting jurisdiction education plans accordingly. For ideas on family engagement in education strategies that address alignment, you can consult the Strategy Finder, including the strategies that are primarily aimed at redefining the purpose of education for students.

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The “Conversation Starter tools” were co-authored by Rebecca Winthrop, Lauren Ziegler, and Mahsa Ershadi as an appendix to the “Collaborating to transform and improve education systems: A playbook for family-school engagement;” you can access that here: brookings.edu/familyengagement. The playbook is a living document that Brookings plans to add to over time. If you have questions about the material or would like to see additional topics or information, please let us know at leapfrogging@brookings.edu.

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Brookings gratefully acknowledges the support provided by the BHP Foundation, Grable Foundation, and the LEGO Foundation.

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