

Protocols for Engaging Students in Redesign Work

Designing a school requires understanding the students and families we serve. Listening to our students with empathy allows us to understand their motivations, emotions, behaviors and choices. It allows us to understand what students think and why they think it. With that understanding we have a solid foundation to innovate and design a school to meet their needs. The purpose of the student interviews is to develop an understanding of the students we serve.

Guidelines for listening and interviewing:

- 1) Ask why often, even if you think you may understand.
- 2) Ask students to describe frequently.
- 3) Avoid “usually” when framing a question; ask for specific and concrete examples and stories.
“Can you tell me more about that?” Continually seek details and specific situations.
- 4) Observe nonverbal behaviors and inconsistencies. Both can be interesting to consider and lead to greater understanding.
- 5) Do not frame questions as yes/no responses. Encourage examples and stories to help you understand. “What was that like for you?”
- 6) Being silent is ok. Allow for time for thinking. Don’t suggest answers.
- 7) Capture in writing or recording what students say. It’s best to have one person recording while another is asking the questions, eliciting the stories and examples.
- 8) When a question bombs, acknowledge it. Ask the student, “Is this is the right question? What might be a better question? What might we be forgetting?”
- 9) When a student raises a challenge or problem in the school or a specific class, ask them what they would suggest to a teacher or school leader. “What would have been a better way to handle that situation?”
- 10) Make sure only one person speaks at a time. Do not allow interruptions.
- 11) Don’t allow a few to dominate the conversation. Allow all an opportunity to speak and to listen.

Steps for the interview:

Keep the groups small; 5 students is the recommended size.

- Introduce yourself.
- Introduce and explain the redesign project. Explain that we need to understand more about our students to redesign a school that best meets your needs. Explain that their responses will be written down or recorded.
- Spend some time building rapport.
- Encourage storytelling and ask for examples; ask the student to explain why often.
- Spend some time exploring the emotions they share and question statements they offer to seek additional details and understand why or how.
- Thank the students for their time and participation.
- Conclude the interview.

***Please use the Data Collection/Student Profiles to record student answers on 5 interview questions.**

***Additional prompts to consider for student interviews:**

- 1) *Describe a teacher you liked the best. Describe the teacher whom you learned the most from this year? Are they different? If so, in what ways? Why?*
- 2) *What questions would you like to ask your teachers? Why?*
- 3) *In your life both in and out of school, what pressures do you feel to do well? What pressures do you feel NOT to do well?*
- 4) *How does a teacher give little signals that they expect you to try hard and do well? How might a teacher act that makes students feel safe to try hard and do well?*
- 5) *Describe a time when you were learning something that was important to you, in or out of school. What made learning this so important?*
- 6) *Teachers are often told to do less talking and set up situations in their classrooms that allow students to be more active in cooperative learning structures (group work) or small group discussions, projects, etc. What do you like about these strategies and why? What do you dislike and why?*