

Listening Plan

Decide what to learn, whose voices to hear, and how to hear them.

You do not need survey data to start listening. Work through the steps below, using what 6,413 parents told other schools as a guide to where to look. Mark the boxes that fit, fill in the plan, and keep the question bank handy for your conversations.

Step 1: What do we most want to learn?

	Area	What the survey results show
☐	Student social challenges	19% of parents rate the school's approach ineffective. It is the most frequently low-rated item at every division and stage.
☐	Discipline and behavioral expectations	15% rate the school's approach ineffective. It ranks among the top eight low-rated items in every division and tenure group.
☐	Administration proactively addressing challenges	12.5% disagree, and it has the largest loyalty gap: a net promoter score of -44 for those who disagree, versus 76 for those who agree.
☐	Academic experience compared with expectations	12% say it is below expectations, up from 5% of first-year families to 15% of families enrolled 9 or more years.
☐	Academic standards	16% say standards are too low and 8% say too high. Parents who say too low have the lowest net promoter score (-10).
☐	Something else we want to learn	

Step 2: Whose voices do we most need?

	Group	What the survey results show	What we already know
☐	First-year families	The most positive group (NPS 70). A fresh view of what you promised compared with what they see.	
☐	Families in years 2 to 4	The first big drop: NPS 52, and ratings of administration fall from 4.46 to 4.15.	
☐	Families in years 5 to 8	NPS 40, and 27% say homework is somewhat or far too much.	
☐	Families enrolled 9 or more years	45% flag at least one of the five areas in Step 1, and 19% are unlikely to recommend the school.	
☐	Families with three or more children	79% feel actively engaged (85% for one-child families).	
☐	Middle Grades families	The lowest academic experience ratings in the survey, and 18% say standards are too low.	
☐	Upper Grades families	The lowest ratings of experiential learning (3.83 on a satisfaction scale).	
☐	Families we rarely hear from	Families who do not usually attend events or answer surveys. Don't assume they are satisfied.	
☐	Families who recently left	Withdrawn families can tell you what no survey of current families reaches.	

Step 3: How will we listen?

Mark the methods that fit your school's time and capacity. A mix works well: numbers to see how widespread something is, and conversations to learn why.

	Method	Best for	Effort	Typical format
☐	Short pulse survey	Getting numbers you can compare and track	Low to medium	5 to 8 questions, about 5 minutes
☐	Focus group	Understanding why, in families' own words	Medium	6 to 8 families, 60 to 75 minutes, neutral facilitator
☐	One-on-one conversations	Sensitive topics, and long-tenured or unhappy families	Medium to high	20 to 30 minutes by phone or in person
☐	Exit conversations	Learning what pushed a family to leave	Low	Short conversation when a family withdraws
☐	Listening sessions at existing events	Reaching more families at low cost	Low	An open table at back-to-school night or a parent association meeting
☐	Records review	Spotting early signals	Low	Re-enrollment by years enrolled, complaint and inquiry logs, response times to families

Step 4: Our listening plan

Whose voices	What we will ask about	Method	Owner	By when
<i>Example: Families in years 2 to 4</i>	<i>How they learn what happened after they raise a concern</i>	<i>Focus group</i>	<i>Director of student life</i>	<i>Nov 15</i>

Step 5: Close the loop

Families are more willing to speak up the next time when they see what happened to what they said.

How will we tell families what we heard and what we will do?

Who will share it, and by when?

- Say what you heard, what you will change, and what you cannot change and why.
- Report on groups, not individuals, and avoid reporting on groups smaller than about 10 families.

Question bank

Student social challenges

- Tell us about a time your child had a conflict with a peer. What happened next, and how did you hear about it?
- How confident are you that the school knows when students are struggling socially?

Discipline and behavioral expectations

- How clear are the school's expectations for behavior? When they are not met, what do you see the school do?
- Do consequences feel fair and consistent?

Administration proactively addressing challenges

- When you have raised a concern, what did you expect to happen, and what did?
- What is one thing leadership should be working on that you have not heard about?

Academic experience compared with expectations

- What did you expect academically when you enrolled? How does it compare now?
- What would make the biggest difference to your child's academic experience?

Academic standards

- How challenging is your child's work: too easy, too hard, or about right? How do you know?
- What would you want to understand about how the school sets academic expectations?

Ground rules for listening

- Say up front why you are asking and what you will do with the answers.
- Keep what people say confidential, and let people opt out of any question.
- Ask open questions and listen. Do not defend or fix in the moment.
- Do not promise changes you cannot make. Promise to share what you learn.