

Student Experience Survey: What School Is Like for Me (Attitude Scales)

Overview and Contents

The Student Experience Survey (Attitude Scales) is a 21-item instrument for third- through sixth-grade students designed to assess perceptions and attitudes related to bullying. Students are asked about perceptions of bullying or aggressive behavior, assertiveness skills, and their own and adults' responsiveness to bullying. The survey can be used as a pre/post measure to evaluate effects of the *Steps to Respect* program. The survey is administered in classrooms and takes 15–20 minutes to complete.

This packet contains the following materials:

- Guide to Using the Survey
- Administration Script
- The Student Experience Survey: What School Is Like for Me (Attitude Scales)

Please call the Client Support Services department at Committee for Children (800-634-4449, ext. 200) if you have further questions after reading this packet.

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Guide to Using the Survey

Description and purpose

The Student Experience Survey (SES) assesses attitudes related to bullying and can be used as a pre/post measure. The survey asks students about their perceptions of bullying or aggressive behavior, assertiveness skills, and their own and adults' responsiveness to bullying at school. Because the *Steps to Respect* program seeks to change students' attitudes about bullying as well as the behavior itself, assessing attitudes is important in evaluating program effects. Moreover, students' perceptions of adult intervention in bullying can be an important indicator of adults' actual awareness and effectiveness—another critical objective of the program. Preliminary findings from an experimental study show promising changes in the attitudes of students receiving the *Steps to Respect* program compared to control students (Frey, Hirschstein, Snell, Edstrom, MacKenzie, & Bruschi, 2004).

Using the SES as an outcome measure

As mentioned above, the SES can be helpful in assessing the effects of the *Steps to Respect* program. The SES measures student attitudes that are related to bullying behavior. However, an outcome evaluation should also include an assessment of bullying and victimization behavior, such as a student survey (the Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire, for example). Using multiple outcome measures will provide more information about program effects and aid interpretation of the evaluation results.

We also recommend a strong evaluation design (for example, pre/post assessment, and multiple participating schools) and procedures to support high-quality program implementation. A well-planned strategy will be essential to optimizing your outcome evaluation. Please refer to "Conducting an Outcome Evaluation for *Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program*" on our Web site (www.cfchildren.org) for further detail. Consultation with someone experienced in program evaluation may be vital as well.

Instructions for use

The SES is recommended for students in third through sixth grade. Schools implementing *Steps to Respect* lessons in third through fifth grade may choose to administer the survey to sixth graders as well as third through fifth graders. This will yield additional information that will be helpful for program implementation. Likewise, if *Steps to Respect* lessons are implemented in fourth through sixth grades, the survey could be given to third-grade students too.

This 21-item survey takes 15–20 minutes to complete depending on students' age and reading ability. To serve as a pretest, the survey should be administered before implementation of *Steps to Respect* classroom lessons. A posttest administration should be given after implementation of *Steps to Respect* skill and literature lessons. The SES can be given by a teacher, counselor, or administrator within the classroom. However, we recommend that someone other than the classroom teacher conduct the administration to increase students' sense of anonymity.

Administration should be prefaced by a brief discussion about the purpose of the survey and guidelines about student behavior during the survey (for example, not saying answers out loud and respecting others' privacy). Confidentiality also should be addressed in the introduction. If students are tracked for evaluation purposes (that is, so their pre- and posttests can be matched), they should be told that their answers will be confidential, and only the staff involved in summarizing the information will have access to the surveys. (An astute student may ask about the identification codes on the survey. You will need to assure the student that there will be restricted access to the key linking identification codes with student names.) If students are not tracked for the evaluation, they can be told that their surveys are anonymous.

See the "administration script" for recommended instructions. We suggest reading the survey items aloud to aid comprehension, particularly for younger students and those with reading difficulties or limited English proficiency.

Scoring

The SES involves four scales composed of the following items:

- Perceived Assertiveness: items 1–5
- Perceived Adult Responsiveness: items 6, 7, 8, and 10
- Bystander Responsibility: items 9, 11, 12, 13, and 14
- Acceptance of Bullying/Aggression: items 15–21

Calculating scale scores. A scale score is an average (mean) of all the items within that scale. Scores for each scale should be calculated for each student survey using these steps:

- For each student survey, collect the item scores within each scale using a spreadsheet or table. Item scores are indicated by the small numbers below the response options on the survey. For example, in part one of the survey, 0 = not hard at all, and 3 = really hard. If a student circled "pretty hard" for item 1, the student's item score would be 2.

- For each student survey, calculate the mean for each of the four scales. The mean is the sum of the scores for each item in the scale, divided by the total number of items (see example below). The calculated means are the scale scores.

Example: Finding the mean for perceived assertiveness for a given student.

| Item number | Item score |
|-------------|------------|
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 1 |
| 5 | 2 |
| Sum | 10 |

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\text{sum}}{\text{number of items}} = \frac{10}{5} = 2$$

Calculating percentage of change. To compare pre- and posttest means, the percentage of change can be calculated for each scale:

$$\text{Percentage (\%) of change} = \frac{\text{Posttest mean} - \text{Pretest mean}}{\text{Pretest mean}} \times 100$$

If the percentage of change for a given scale is a positive number, this will indicate an increase from pre- to posttest; a negative percentage of change will indicate a decrease. Looking at the percentage of change for students from pre- to posttest is akin to “eyeballing” the results. However, percentage of change does not tell you whether the change is statistically significant, that is, whether the change is reliable.

Testing the significance of student change. A statistical test (such as a t-test) is necessary to determine if students’ pre/post change is reliable and not due to a chance occurrence. Students’ *individual change* can be tested statistically if individuals are tracked from pre- to posttest. On the other hand, if students are surveyed anonymously, a statistical test will assess aggregated rather than individual change. Aggregated change refers to the comparison of school means at pre- and posttest, requiring the participation of multiple schools in the evaluation to detect significant change.

Interpreting results

Displaying your results. Scale scores can be used to describe overall attitudes related to bullying within a school or district. Bar and line graphs are helpful for displaying results and showing changes from pre- to posttest.

Interpretation of statistical significance. If statistical tests were used to assess pre- and posttest scores, your results will indicate whether student change was statistically significant. Statistical significance indicates that the results were reliable and not likely due to a chance occurrence. Note that statistical “power” for detecting significant change will be contingent on the number of students being evaluated—the more students involved, the better the probability of detecting true change.

Interpretation of “social significance.” Determining the “social significance” or real-world impact of the program will be aided greatly by the use of comparison schools. A significant difference between schools that receive the program and those that do not is good evidence that the program had an impact on students—even if the effect was a lack of deterioration in attitudes rather than an actual improvement.

Concluding a program effect. Student outcomes can be affected by a variety of factors beyond the program. A lack of positive change from pre- to posttest may be related to low statistical power because too few students participated in the evaluation. The absence of comparison schools may also hinder a conclusion of positive program effect if the true effect was a lack of deterioration in students receiving the program. This effect may be unnoticed if students are compared to themselves at pretest rather than to those who do not receive the program. A strong evaluation design (such as one using multiple and/or comparison schools) will allow you to attribute outcomes to the program more confidently.

Process (or implementation) evaluation can also be extremely helpful in interpreting outcome results. By documenting what the program was like “in action,” you can assess the degree to which the program was implemented as intended. The higher the implementation quality, the greater will be your probability for demonstrating positive findings and capacity for concluding program effectiveness.

Attitude goals for students. Because the research about bullying-related attitudes is very limited, norms are not available with which to compare your school/district results. However, a “socially significant” goal would be for students, in general, to indicate zero-to-little acceptance of bullying and aggression and some level (such as more than “a little”) of responsibility to intervene in bullying incidents at their school. Another goal could be for students to report a moderate to high level of perceived assertiveness (that is, no to little difficulty) responding to bullying. Finally, after program implementation, it is hoped that students will report higher perceived adult responsiveness than they did before implementation.

Frey, K. S., Hirschstein, M. K., Snell, J. L., Edstrom, L. V., MacKenzie, E. P., & Bruschi, C. (2004, May). *Reducing playground bullying and attitudes that support it: An experimental trial of the Steps to Respect program*. In K. S. Frey (Chair), *Policy to action: Bullying prevention in the real world*. Symposium conducted at the annual meeting of the Society for Prevention Research, Quebec City, Canada.

Frey, K. S., Dietsch, B. J., Diaz, M., MacKenzie, E. P., Edstrom, L. V., Hirschstein, M. K., & Snell, J. L. (2004). *The Student Experience Survey: What school is like for me*. Seattle, WA: Committee for Children.

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Administration Script

Use the following script to introduce and administer the Student Experience Survey to students.

Introduction. *Today we are giving a survey to students in third through fifth grades (or fourth through sixth) to learn about what things are like for students here. This will take 15–20 minutes. The survey asks your opinion about different things at school. For example, I'll ask you how hard it would be to calmly tell kids to stop if they were teasing you. There are no wrong or right answers to the questions; we are just interested in what you want to tell us.*

We want your answers to be private. To keep your answers private, please gently tear off the first page with your name on it and use it to cover your answers as you go along. Your name will not be on your survey.

Please don't say answers out loud or show your answers to others. You may skip any question that you don't want to answer. Please do not write the names of other students when answering any of the questions.

I am going to read the questions out loud. You may choose to follow along with me, or you may go ahead and work at your own pace. Raise your hand if you need help or have a question. If you have a hard time remembering or aren't sure of an answer, just make your best guess.

Let's start with the first page. The first question asks if you are a boy or girl—circle your answer. The next question asks what grade you are in—circle your grade. The next question asks how old you are—circle your age. Make sure your circles are good and dark.

Part 1. *Now the rest of the questions on this page and the next one ask you how hard it would be to do things. For example, there is a game you'd really like to have—how hard would it be to save money to buy it yourself? Would it be not hard at all, a little bit hard, pretty hard, or really hard? Circle how hard it would be for you. (Read questions 1–5 below on pages 1–2 of the survey—emphasizing the word **calmly**.)*

- 1. Kids at school are pushing you around. How hard would it be to **calmly** tell them to stop?*
- 2. Kids at school are ganging up on you. How hard would it be to **calmly** tell them to stop?*
- 3. Kids at school are teasing you. How hard would it be to **calmly** tell them to stop?*

4. Kids at school are telling lies about you. How hard would it be to **calmly** tell them to stop?
5. Kids are passing mean notes about you in class. How hard would it be to **calmly** tell them to stop?

Part 2. The questions on this page ask if something is, in your opinion, very true, pretty true, a little true, or not true at all. The example says, "If we had free time at school, I would draw pictures." If that's how you feel, circle "very true." If it's pretty much how you feel, circle "pretty true." If you feel a little bit that way, circle "a little true." If that is not true at all for you, circle "not true."
(Read questions 6–14 on pages 3–4 of the survey.)

6. My school is a safe place to be.
7. If I were being bullied, I would ask an adult at school for help.
8. Adults at my school know about kids being bullied.
9. If a bunch of kids at school were teasing another kid, I would **calmly** tell them to stop.
10. Adults at my school stop kids from being bullied.
11. If I saw someone being ganged up on at school, I would tell an adult.
12. If my friends were passing mean notes about another kid, I would tell them to stop.
13. If my friends were telling lies about another kid, I would tell them to stop.
14. If I saw someone being hit or pushed around at school, I would tell an adult.

Part 3. In this part, we want to know what you think about things that happen at school. I will read a sentence, then you decide how much you agree with it. The example says, "It's okay to go to the store by yourself." Some kids might think this is okay, others might not. What do you think? Do you agree a lot, agree some, agree a little, or not at all? Circle the one that shows what you think. (Read questions 15–21 on pages 5–6 of the survey.)

15. It's okay to say something mean to a kid who's pushing you around.
16. It's okay to say something mean to a kid who really makes you angry.
17. It's okay to say something mean to a kid who does something mean to you.
18. It's okay to hit a kid who hits you first.
19. If a kid makes you angry, it's okay to say that you won't like the kid anymore.
20. It's okay to hit a kid who's pushing you around.
21. It's okay to stop talking to a kid to get even.

Conclusion. Thank you for answering the questions on the survey. Your answers will help us learn about what things are like for kids at this school. Do you have any questions you'd like to ask me?

Examples of student questions

Below are examples of possible questions students may ask, along with possible answers you can offer. The most important things to convey to students are (a) there are no right or wrong answers—just opinions, and (b) students' responses will be kept either confidential or anonymous, depending on the evaluation strategy.

Why are you doing this?

We want to learn about students' experiences at school. You are the experts.

Why do you ask about so many bad things?

We want to know about different things that happen at school—the fun stuff and also the not-so-fun stuff, like kids being teased. You know the most about those things. We want to hear from you about what happens.

What will you do with our answers?

We will look at how lots of different kids answered the questions. That will give us a big picture of what things are like at school.

What do the numbers at the top of each page mean? (referring to ID codes, in the case they are used to track students from pre- to posttest)

The numbers are for us to keep track of whom we've given the survey to. Remember that we are keeping your answers private and that the surveys will not have your names on them. Only a few people in the office (name the staff members, if possible) will be able to see the surveys so they can summarize or put together all the information you have given us.

What do the numbers below each of the boxes mean? (referring to the numbers below the response options for each question)

These numbers help us enter the information into a computer.

Why are you asking us the same questions again? (at posttest)

We want to know if things have changed or stayed the same since the last time we asked you these questions.

What School Is Like for Me

ID # _____

Name _____

What School Is Like for Me

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
| Are you a boy or a girl? | Boy | Girl | | | | |
| What grade are you in? | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | |
| How old are you? | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |

Part One

Please circle the answer that is most true for you. There are no right or wrong answers. We just want to know what you think. You may skip any questions that you don't want to answer.

Example:

*There is a game that you'd really like to have. How hard would it be to save the money to buy it yourself?

not hard at all

a little bit hard

Pretty Hard

REALLY HARD

1. Kids at school are pushing you around. How hard would it be to calmly tell them to stop?

not hard at all

a little bit hard

Pretty Hard

REALLY HARD

0

1

2

3

2. Kids at school are ganging up on you. How hard would it be to calmly tell them to stop?

not hard at all

a little bit hard

Pretty Hard

REALLY HARD

0

1

2

3

3. Kids at school are teasing you. How hard would it be to calmly tell them to stop?

not hard at all

a little bit hard

Pretty Hard

REALLY HARD

0

1

2

3

4. Kids at school are telling lies about you. How hard would it be to calmly tell them to stop?

not hard at all

a little bit hard

Pretty Hard

REALLY HARD

0

1

2

3

5. Kids are passing mean notes about you in class. How hard would it be to calmly tell them to stop?

not hard at all

a little bit hard

Pretty Hard

REALLY HARD

0

1

2

3

Part Two

Circle the answer that is most true for you.

Example:

*If we had free time at school, I would draw pictures.

Very TRUE

Pretty true

a little true

not true

6. My school is a safe place to be.

Very TRUE

Pretty true

a little true

not true

3

2

1

0

7. If I were being bullied, I would ask an adult at school for help.

Very TRUE

Pretty true

a little true

not true

3

2

1

0

8. Adults at my school know about kids being bullied.

Very TRUE

Pretty true

a little true

not true

3

2

1

0

9. If a bunch of kids at school were teasing another kid, I would calmly tell them to stop.

Very TRUE

Pretty true

a little true

not true

3

2

1

0

10. Adults at my school stop kids from being bullied.

Very TRUE

Pretty true

a little true

not true

3

2

1

0

11. If I saw someone being ganged up on at school, I would tell an adult.

Very TRUE

Pretty true

a little true

not true

3

2

1

0

12. If my friends were passing mean notes about another kid, I would tell them to stop.

Very TRUE

Pretty true

a little true

not true

3

2

1

0

13. If my friends were telling lies about another kid, I would tell them to stop.

Very TRUE

Pretty true

a little true

not true

3

2

1

0

14. If I saw someone being hit or pushed around at school, I would tell an adult.

Very TRUE

Pretty true

a little true

not true

3

2

1

0

Part Three

Circle the answer that shows how much you agree with each sentence.

Example:

*It's okay to go to the store by yourself.

Agree A LOT

Agree some

agree a little

don't agree

15. It's okay to say something mean to a kid who's pushing you around.

Agree A LOT

Agree some

agree a little

don't agree

3

2

1

0

16. It's okay to say something mean to a kid who really makes you angry.

Agree A LOT

Agree some

agree a little

don't agree

3

2

1

0

17. It's okay to say something mean to a kid who does something mean to you.

Agree A LOT

Agree some

agree a little

don't agree

3

2

1

0

18. It's okay to hit a kid who hits you first.

Agree A LOT

Agree some

agree a little

don't agree

3

2

1

0

19. If a kid makes you angry, it's okay to say that you won't like the kid anymore.

Agree A LOT

Agree some

agree a little

don't agree

3

2

1

0

20. It's okay to hit a kid who's pushing you around.

Agree A LOT

Agree some

agree a little

don't agree

3

2

1

0

21. It's okay to stop talking to a kid to get even.

Agree A LOT

Agree some

agree a little

don't agree

3

2

1

0

END. Please wait quietly.