2.4. Writing your own questions

Schools can decide whether there are school-specific questions that would be useful to include in their student, parent, and/or staff surveys. Once developed, these can be included in the School Survey online tool (see How-to Guide: Create – Adding Custom Questions). Refer to Box 3 below for some quick tips to consider when writing your own questions.

It is recommended that **no more than five** custom questions be added. Additional questions increase the time burden and the risk of survey fatigue for your respondents, which may impact on the quality of the answers.

There may be other surveys conducted in your school at different times, so you should carefully consider the need of any additional questions to avoid duplication.

Box 3: Tips for survey question design.

Ensure that the answers to the questions will provide the information needed to fulfil your main objectives.

There should be a sharp and narrow focus for your questions, and it should link to the explicit school improvement agenda of your school.

Keep your questions short and simple so the respondents have the best chance to understand them.

Don't ask for two things at once (avoid the 'double-barrelled question').
Word the question appropriately for the target audience.
Use clear, precise, and unambiguous language.
Avoid unnecessary adjectives and adverbs, negatives and double negatives.

Avoid emotionally loaded or uncomfortable questions.

Don't use questions that might cause distress or discomfort for your respondents or to those who will review the answers.
Keep question wording neutral to avoid 'leading' to a desired response or to risk respondents feeling targeted by the content.

Consider the response options when developing the questions.

Decide whether a text box (qualitative) or a scale (e.g., 1-5; quantitative) will provide the best capture of the feedback/response.
Consider if you require a "not applicable" or "don't know" option.
Consider whether the response options lead or limit the respondent to answer in a particular way.

3. Engaging your school community

High levels of engagement and participation in the School Survey is important in ensuring that you can act on comprehensive feedback that represents your school community.

We highly recommend that all schools use a census approach, enabling and encouraging appropriately aged students, and all parents and school staff to respond. Information on sampling methodologies for the School Survey can be found in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Guidelines for Asking the National Student and Parent School Opinion.

Consider what previous engagement strategies were successful at your school and what support may need to be put in place to help students, parents, and staff complete the surveys. We have included some strategies being used in schools currently (see page 11).

3.1. Checklist

☐ Nominate a 'School Survey Champion' – the member(s) of your school community who will help advocate for and coordinate the School Survey process for your school (see box on page 10).

☐ Consult with key staff members and school community members about who may be best placed to support survey participation for students and families.

☐ Have a look at the Bush Ready remote engagement strategies for ideas to engage with regional remote communities.

☐ Plan how you will make the survey accessible for people who are not proficient English speakers (see 3.2 Supporting EAL/D participants on page 10).

☐ Review your events schedule between Weeks 4-6 and identify the opportunities where you and your staff can facilitate survey participation.

☐ Designate classroom time to allow students to complete the survey.

☐ Designate meeting times to allow staff to complete the survey.

☐ Organise events and incentives to invite parents/carers to the school to complete the survey.

☐ Share survey links in social media / emails / letters / text messages to staff and students and their families. Suggested content for emails and newsletter are available, see How-To Guide: Distribute – Newsletter and email templates.

☐ Promote the survey on your school website page / write an article for newsletter or blog / use community radio to spread the word.

☐ Make a presentation at school or year level assembly.

☐ Share videos and information at school council meetings.

Operating Guidelines for Term 3, 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Please refer to the Operating Guidelines for Term 3, 2020 and your school's pandemic plans to determine the best delivery of programs and activities in your school.

Visit the Pandemic Communications Portal to see the latest updates and advice for Department of Education staff regarding coronavirus (COVID-19).

3.2. Supporting EAL/D participants

Over 50% of Territory students come from a language background other than English. This may mean that they or their families are learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D).

To independently access the student survey, EAL/D students need to be working at Reading Level 3 or above as determined by the NT EAL/D Learning Progressions. Students working below Reading Level 3 will need access to home language speakers, or extensive support to read and comprehend each survey question. The following may help to make your School Survey more accessible to your EAL/D participants.

➢ Identify the students working below Reading Level 3, using eDash, and implement the scaffolds that will be required for students to engage with the survey.

➢ Schools may consider arranging face-to-face interviews and translators to work with survey respondents. Contact the School Survey team to find out how the department can help.

➢ Staff may need to adjust the language used in the surveys to support comprehension. Plain English interpretation and visual cues can be found on the School Survey page in eLearn and used as an alternative format in place of the online version.

➢ You can access audio recordings of the department's mandated set of questions on the School Survey page in eLearn. This will be accessible to EAL/D students working at Listening Level 3 and above.

➢ Work with community organisations/programs, such as the Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS), to spread key messages and increase engagement.

School Survey champions

The School Survey Champion is the person(s) within your school community who can help to communicate the key messages of the School Survey, support the implementation of the surveys, and locally advocate for and facilitate survey participation among students and families, and school staff.

The role of the School Survey Champion will depend on the need of your school context. For example, they could be the:

➢ Business / Administrations manager who can set up and create the surveys, print paper copies, and coordinate the manual data entry.

➢ Technology / school support staff who can set up spaces and devices to enable survey participation.

➢ One or more staff who can assist EAL/D participants using home language.

➢ Locally respected community member(s) who can promote the survey as a process for school-community partnership and assist parents to complete the survey in language.

➢ Staff member(s) involved in activating student and community voice to communicate the value and purpose of the School Survey.

➢ Member(s) from school / local council who can encourage survey participation from families.

Once nominated, you can add your School Survey champion as a user to the School Survey online tool.

3.3. Student engagement strategies

➢ Share the posters and the promotional videos in assembly or at the start of class. You can download these from the School Survey page in eLearn and from the department's social media platforms.

➢ Identify which school support staff can help students complete the survey (e.g., assistant teachers, support staff).

➢ Designate classroom time for students to complete the survey; some teachers may wish to deliver the survey over a week with a few questions per day depending on the length of time students stay engaged.

➢ Set up spaces where students can complete the survey online by providing access to devices (e.g., library or office).

➢ Activate student representative groups and leaders to provide peer-to-peer engagement and support (e.g., helping buddies, leading survey participation instead of staff).

3.4. Parent and carer engagement strategies

➢ Communicate the purpose of the School Survey and how beneficial their feedback is for improving their child's education. You can download and circulate School Survey FAQs for Parents and Carers from the School Survey page in eLearn.

➢ Share the posters in the local clinic, shop, recreation centre, and other places around the community.

➢ Host a parent and families night with access to computers or the paper-based survey, and provide assistance while parents complete the survey.

➢ Consider using an incentive-based strategy such as a school raffle (e.g., meat tray, movie vouchers) for parents who participate in the survey.

➢ Consider a street-side survey that involves staff or students, with iPads or paper form, to catch parents during school drop-off or pick-up.

➢ Ask your students to encourage their parents to participate in the survey.

➢ Set up spaces where parents can complete the survey online by providing access to devices (e.g., library or office).

➢ Provide devices to parents during school events (e.g., sports days, BBQs, assemblies) to encourage survey completion.

➢ Inform parents of the way the school has used the past results of the survey and what this means for improving their school.

3.5. Staff engagement strategies

➢ Widely communicate the purpose and value of the School Survey. You can download and circulate the 'Why it matters' resources from the School Survey page in eLearn.

➢ Set aside a time in staff meetings to for staff to complete the survey at school.

➢ Host a morning/afternoon tea with access to devices for staff to complete the survey.

➢ Consider using an incentive-based strategy such as a school raffle (e.g., meat tray, movie vouchers) for staff who participate in the survey.

4. Survey support

The department offers a range of resources and direct support to help schools through the live collection process, increase survey participation, and to use their results for school improvement planning.

➢ The department's School Survey team offers direct to schools throughout the year.

➢ Technical support (such as how to log in, add staff members, set up and distribute your surveys, and monitor responses) via the helpdesk on 1800 620 970.

➢ The School Improvement and Leadership (SIL) team can work with you to help to unpack your results and use them in school improvement planning and annual reporting.

➢ The School Survey page in eLearn contains the key information, guides and resources to support your school's participation in the School Survey and through the implementation process.

Picture 1. **eLearn** is the department's online hub of high-quality educational resources to support teaching, learning and school improvement. The School Survey page sits under the **Leading School Improvement** tab in the **Assess** stage of the school improvement journey.
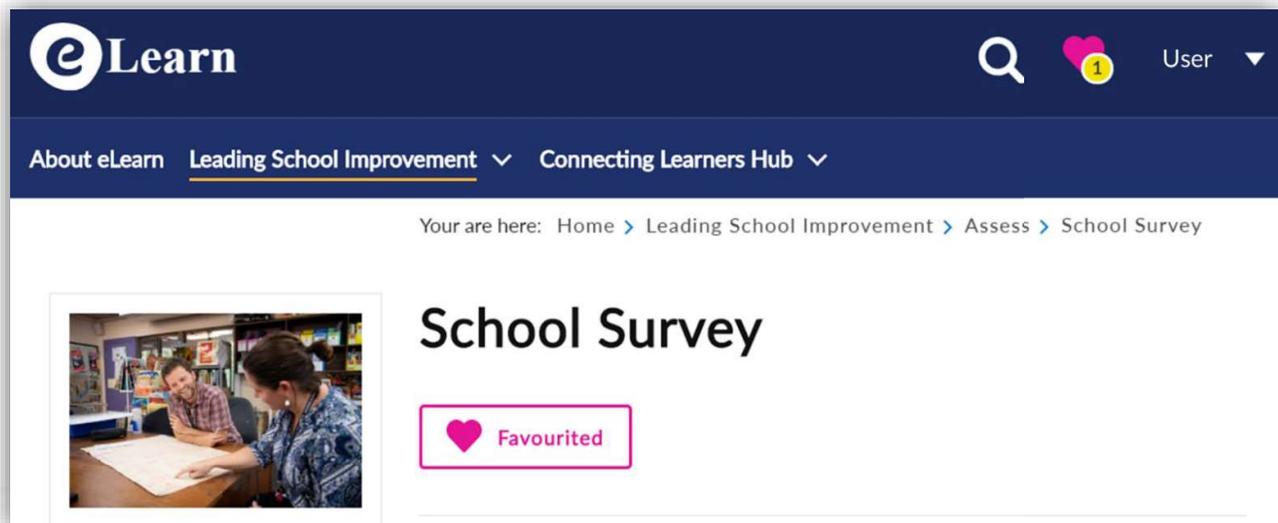
Key contacts	
Technical support:	1800 620 970
NT DoE School Survey team:	Phone (08) 899 95790 | Email schoolsurvey.doe@nt.gov.au
School Survey online tool:	https://www.schoolsurvey.edu.au/Welcome
School Survey (eLearn):	https://elearn.ntschools.net/leading-school-improvement/assess/school-survey