

LESSON: SURVEY YOUR COMMUNITY (3 DAYS + 1 DAY TO TALLY RESULTS)

Overview: The purpose of this lesson is to have students gain a deeper understanding of how the community feels about their issue. In doing so, students also will learn how to write and conduct an unbiased survey.

Student Objectives:

- Identify bias in survey questions
- List the qualities of a good survey
- Write and conduct a survey that will act as an accurate instrument in diagnosing a community problem
- Tally a survey and analyze its results

Assessments:

- What's Wrong with This Survey?
- Community Survey

Materials:

- Violence Survey
- What's Wrong with This Survey? worksheet
- Conducting a Community Survey Checklist
- Sample Survey Tally Sheet
- Survey Question Brainstorming Guide
- Types of Survey Questions handout

Vocabulary:

- sample
- validity
- reliability

BELL-RINGER: Mock survey (5 minutes)

Students complete the mock Violence Survey.

BEFORE: Tally results (5 minutes)

Create a table on the board or on an overhead and ask students to raise their hands to tally their responses. Put responses on the board/overhead.

DURING: Discuss survey, define key terms, note-taking (25 minutes)

Ask the class if they saw any problems with the survey. If they don't bring up the following points on their own, lead the students to them:

- Sample wasn't representative of the entire school. Does the class represent all races, ages, ability levels, ethnicities, languages, etc., that exist in the school? Could populations not represented in the class possibly have responded differently?
- Some questions were worded in a biased way.
- Having respondents have to publicly reveal their answers may have affected their answers/invades their privacy.
- Some questions were not specific and succinct; it was unclear what they were asking, or they asked more than one thing.
- Answer choices didn't reflect all possible opinions or perspectives. As a result, some people's responses may not have reflected their perspective accurately.

Have students copy the following terms into their vocabulary journals:



sample: a group of people that represents a larger group

validity: extent to which a survey accurately measures what it is supposed to

reliability: extent to which a survey gives consistent results when applied to different individuals at one time or to the same individuals over time

Write “A Good Survey Must...” on the board or overhead and explain to students that they should copy the following notes down. List points students have already brought up and solicit additional responses to define what a good survey should do. Be sure to include the following:

- Be short and specific with its questions.
- Have questions that ask one thing at a time.
- Have all possible responses available as choices.
- Have its questions worded neutrally, without any bias.
- Be taken from a *random sample* that is representative of its larger group.
- Be administered with a high level of *reliability*.
- Have *valid* results that accurately reflect the larger group’s perspectives.

AFTER: “What’s wrong with this survey?” (5–10 minutes)

Distribute the What’s Wrong with This Survey? worksheet to students. Have students fill in the blanks below each survey question or description with a brief statement about what is wrong with each. If no problem exists, they should simply write “no problem.” For your reference, an answer sheet immediately follows the worksheet.

CLOSER: Check-in (2 minutes)

Check to see how far students have progressed on the What’s Wrong with This Survey? worksheet and clarify any questions that might arise. Explain that they should finish the worksheet for homework if they have not already finished.

DAY 2

BELL-RINGER: Homework check (5 minutes)

Post answers to *What's Wrong with This Survey?* on an overhead and have students check their homework.

BEFORE: Setting goals for our survey (10 minutes)

Ask students: "How might a survey help us understand the issues that are important to our community? What information would we want to find out?" Distribute the Survey Question Brainstorming Guide and have students work in pairs to answer the questions and then discuss as a whole class.

(This is a crucial step to developing a good survey. If you don't have a clear idea of what you are trying to learn, you can wind up with a lot of random data that does not do much to inform your issue.) Remind students that the issue has been chosen but we still need to understand the community's perspective on the issue to help direct our action on it.

DURING: Drafting a survey (15 minutes)

Have students work in groups of three or four to develop a draft of a survey aimed at accomplishing the goals clearly established in the "Before" activity. Distribute the Types of Survey Questions handout to your students to help them better understand how to write expert survey questions.

AFTER: Checklist (5–10 minutes)

Pass out copies of the Conducting a Community Survey Checklist and have students assess their survey so far and revise any questions that might need revision.

CLOSER: Check-in (5 minutes)

Have groups determine whether their survey is complete or whether it needs more work. If it needs more work, groups should divide up tasks for homework, with the expectation that drafts of surveys will be completed by class tomorrow.



Note: Writing good survey questions is difficult—you may need students to review and revise their survey questions a number of times before they are ready.

DAY 3

BELL-RINGER: Group check-in (3 minutes)

Students should meet with their groups and make sure they have a draft of a survey to circulate in class.

BEFORE: Round robin (15 minutes)



Note: You might want to give each group a red (or other color) pen to use, as they will be editing their peers' papers.

Students should be seated with their group and pass their draft survey questions to the group sitting to their right. Using the Conducting a Community Survey Checklist, students should mark up and/or correct any questions they feel are not well-written. They should also put a star next to questions they feel are very well-written. Give groups three to five minutes to read and comment on each survey and then have them pass their papers to the right. Continue this process until every group has read every draft survey.

DURING: Compiling the best questions (15 minutes)

Collect all the drafts and ask students to read aloud the questions that received stars as best questions. You might want to have one student at the board or overhead copying down the questions as they read aloud. As the best questions are compiled, have students watch for redundancy (is the same thing being asked more than once? If so, which questions gets to what we are looking for the best?). Once the best questions have been compiled, ask students what, if anything, is missing. Does this collection of questions get to our goals established yesterday? If not, have students mine questions from the drafts or write new ones to address any gaps.



Note: You may want to have one or two students facilitate the compilation of the best questions.

AFTER: Developing a plan and a timeline (10 minutes)

Assign one student the task of typing up the agreed-upon survey and another student to proof-read the typed survey.

Hand out the Sample Survey Tally Sheet and explain how the surveys will be tallied. Have students develop a plan of how they will conduct the surveys (i.e., in teams or individually, orally or in writing), where they will go to conduct the survey, when will they go, how many surveys each

student is expected to gather and how long they will have to complete this task (give them a date when you will have printed out copies of the survey ready for them).

CLOSER: Review (2 minutes)

Review the established timeline and plan and check that the typist and proofreader will be able to complete their tasks in the allotted time.



Notes on Surveys:

Planning...

If possible, it is good to give students more than one night to conduct surveys. A weekend is ideal. This might require filling in a day or two of lessons while students are conducting surveys. This is a good opportunity to:

- Practice Socratic Seminar (see readings in appendix)
- Revisit a skill you think students need additional work with
- Review vocabulary thus far

Safety...

Some students may live in a neighborhood where random door-knocking and loitering outside stores might not be safe. If this is the case, possible modifications for students might include focusing just on the school community and interviewing students and school staff, or interviewing family members and friends. Remind students that telephone interviews are acceptable.

Tallying Surveys...

Depending on the sample size and the information sought, it may be important for the class to take note of certain demographic factors of their respondents. If they asked for demographic info on their survey, they will first need to sort the surveys by hand into separate stacks by category (for example, all men, all sophomores, all African Americans, etc.). If they asked for more than one demographic variable in their survey, have them divide the surveys into the smallest components first (for example, Latino males, or if there are three variables, Asian female freshmen, etc.). Next, tally the responses on a tally sheet like the one provided. The students can then just combine the count on separate tally sheets to get the totals for the next “level up” in the variables (for example, by combining the counts on the separate tally sheets for African American males, White males, Asian males, and Latino males, they now have the total tally for all males).

Then again, your class may only be interested in seeing how the community as a whole is affected by the issue, and keeping track of demographics may be irrelevant.

Tips on Tallying Your Surveys...

- Have students work with a partner. One student can read out the answers while the other makes hash marks on the tally sheet.
- Create a “central command station” of one or two students who compile individual tally sheets onto one class tally sheet.
- If your survey has fewer than 10 questions and fewer than 100 respondents, you can create a template on surveymonkey.com for free and enter the data directly.
- If you have more than 100 respondents, contact us at cfac@mikvachallenge.org and we can help you tally your results.
- You can create a spreadsheet in Google docs and have students conduct data entry that way.
- Divide up the work amongst the class, and monitor them to be sure they are tallying carefully!

Violence Survey

The Center for Violence Prevention is conducting a study of students to figure out how the issue of violence affects students. This class is being used as a sample for the entire school. Please answer the following questions honestly.

1. **Have you been the victim of a violent act, and did it make you feel afraid?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. **Why do you think having more police in the streets would lower the number of violent crimes?**
 - a. Because criminals would be more afraid
 - b. Because more gang members would be in jail
 - c. Because less people would hang out in the street

3. **Which of the following best represents your opinion on how to reduce violence?**
 - a. Punishment for violent crimes should be harsher
 - b. More police should be on the streets
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Name: _____

Date: _____

What's Wrong with This Survey?

Read each survey question. If there is a problem with the question, write a sentence explaining the problem in the space below. If there is nothing wrong with the question, write "No problem" in the space below the question. Refer to your notes on what makes a good survey.

1. Would you actually want to have curfew hours for children be extended until 1 a.m.?
a. Yes b. No
2. Do you support Senate Bill 472?
a. Yes b. No
3. If you have been a crime victim before, what type of crime was it?
a. Violent b. Car c. House
4. Don't you think our schools need more funding?
a. Yes b. No c. Not sure
5. Approximately how many hours per week do you watch television?
a. I don't watch television b. ½ hour–1 hour c. 2–4 hours
d. 4–6 hours e. 6–8 hours f. More than 8 hours
6. How many older people live on your block?
a. 5–10 b. 10–20 c. 20–40 d. Over 40
7. Do you like the texture and flavor of our lunchroom food?
a. Yes b. No c. Not sure
8. Have you ever tried smoking marijuana?
a. Yes b. No

Possible Answers for the “What’s Wrong with This Survey?” Worksheet

When you review this worksheet with your students, you may also have them propose better ways to ask a similar question. Some examples are given below.

1. The word “actually” suggests the writer’s bias. Some respondents may not be sure. To fix the question, you could change it to, “Would you approve of extending curfew hours for children until 1 a.m.?” and “I’m not sure” could be choice C.
2. Respondents may be unsure what Senate Bill 472 is. To fix, explain SB 472. For example, “Senate Bill 472 is currently being considered in our state government. This bill would allow girls under the age of 18 to have an abortion without requiring parental notification. Do you support this bill?” Also, the question should include choice C, “I’m not sure.”
3. The choices are terribly unclear, and don’t represent all possible answers. The wording for each answer is awkward; “Car” is not a type of crime. To fix, more choices representing all possible answers would be needed. The choices might depend on what the surveyor is looking for; the answer choices could simply be “violent” or “non-violent.” That would cover all possible answers.
4. The wording reflects the writer’s bias. Instead of “Don’t you,” write “Do you.” It could also be pointed out that the results of this might not be altogether helpful; this could be considered an obvious question, similar to “Are you against the legalization of cocaine?” Depending on the survey’s purpose, a better way of asking the question might be, “Would you support raising income taxes to provide more funding for schools?”
5. No real problem here. There might not be any really interesting difference between someone who watches 2–4 hours of TV per week and someone who watch 4–6 hours. The choices might therefore be broadened into “1–2 hours,” “2–6 hours,” “6–10 hours,” etc.
6. Respondents could be confused about what “older” means. Over 30? Over 60? The question could read, “How many people over the age of 65 live on your block?”
7. This question is asking two things at once. This should be made into two questions, one about texture, the other about flavor.
8. This is a personal question that respondents may be uncomfortable and therefore dishonest in answering. Questions like this should be prefaced with a reminder about the respondent’s confidentiality and a statement to put them at ease. For example, “Many people experiment with drugs like marijuana at some point in their life. In order to design programs to help people, we need to collect accurate, confidential information about drug use. Have you personally ever tried marijuana?”

Name: _____

Date: _____

Survey Question Brainstorming Guide

1. What is your stance on your issue? What do you believe about it?

2. How are you going to use your survey data?

- To prove our hypothesis
- To prove the existence of the problem
- To get support for our solutions
- To leverage a decision maker
- To compare our data to national data
- Other

3. What do we want to know?

4. Who do we want to know it from?

Types of Survey Questions

Type	Example	Benefits	Downsides
Open Ended	How should high schools be reinvented?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Captures more information from the subject including feelings and attitudes • Research gets better access to the subjects' true feelings on the issue • Great for generating quotes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to measure how the entire group feels about the issue • Limited quantitative data available • Analysis is extremely time-consuming
Closed Ended Yes or No	Should high schools be reinvented? Yes or No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data is easy to analyze • More specific, and data reflects the thoughts of the entire group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject responses are limited to the answer choices provided • Not guaranteed to capture the true feelings of the subject • Does not include the subjects' reasons for the answer
Likert Scale	High schools need to be reinvented. Strongly agree Strongly disagree 5 4 3 2 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generates quantitative data that expresses the feelings of the subject • Shows how strongly the group holds a particular belief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjects often feel there is a right way to answer these questions • Often difficult to determine if the question requires a Likert Scale or a simple closed answer
Multiple Choice	How should high schools be reinvented? a. Turnarounds b. Create small schools c. Do nothing, high schools are fine as they are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows subjects' priorities and preferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not capture the subjects' reasoning for their preferences
Ranking	Which is the most effective way to reinvent high schools? (Rank on a scale of 1 to 3) ___ Turnarounds ___ Create small schools ___ Increase student voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can compare a lot of ideas • Shows preference for different solutions or ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept of ranking is complicated • It is hard to rank more than six ideas
Open and Closed Ended	Should high schools be reinvented? If so how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Captures the reasoning behind the subjects' decision while generating easy-to-use quantitative data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generates too much information that may not be useful • Should be limited to questions where the why is imperative to your research

Name: _____

Date: _____

Conducting a Community Survey Checklist

DOES OUR SURVEY...

- ... have an introduction that explains who we are, why we're doing this survey, and why people should care enough to fill it out?
- ... ask personal questions that are preceded by an explanation and an assurance of the respondent's confidentiality?
- ... have questions that are as short and specific as possible?
- ... ask only one question at a time?
- ... have all possible responses for each question?
- ... have neutrally worded questions that don't show any bias?
- ... have space for people to identify their age/race/sex/income level/etc. if we want to know whether these things make a difference?

ALSO, WILL OUR SURVEY...

- ... be given out to a random sample that is truly representative of its larger group?
- ... be administered with a high level of reliability so that people won't answer the survey differently because of where they are, who they're around, or when they're being asked?
- ... have valid results that accurately reflect the larger group's perspectives?
- ... be given to a sample large enough that we can be confident that it will accurately reflect the larger population it represents? **A simple rule of thumb: give the survey to at least 10% of the total population you are targeting, but give it to no fewer than 50 people, and no more than 1,000. The more people you give the survey to, the more accurate your results will be.**
- ... need to be translated to languages other than English?

Sample Survey Tally Sheet

Age Category _____	Sex _____	Race _____	Other _____
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Question Number	Answer			
	a.	b.	c.	d.
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				