



Build student feedback on trust and respect

Consulting students about what they need to learn is a process of building mutual trust and respect, according to Alison Cook-Sather, professor of education and coordinator of the Teaching and Learning Initiative at Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pa.

When planning to engage student feedback, consider the principles on p. 7 that Cook-Sather offers to help build trust and respect. Answer the questions below each principle to begin applying them to your own context.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN ENGAGING STUDENT FEEDBACK

Be sure you are committed not only to listening but also to responding.

Educators should consult students only if they have a genuine desire to hear what students have to say and a firm commitment to use what students say to improve teaching and learning in classrooms.

How can you secure commitment to action from others on staff?

Be prepared to explain your purpose and focus.

Educators should explain clearly to students the purpose and focus of the consultation, making clear how, and why, if appropriate, they were selected for consultation and what will happen to what they say, including the educator's own willingness to be influenced by what students say as well as by other necessary considerations.

How will you articulate the purpose and intentions to students?

Create conditions for dialogue.

The conditions of dialogue — in which we listen to and learn from each other in new ways — make the consultation productive.

What can you do to create an environment where students are active participants in conversations?

Choose methods that focus on deepening understanding.

The methods of consultation used should be chosen to deepen educators' understanding of students' experiences of teaching and learning in classrooms and the school as a whole.

What types of questions can you ask to better understand the full range of student experiences with and perspectives of teaching practices?

Give students feedback.

After consultation, students need feedback on how what they have said has been understood and on how it will influence or has influenced educator planning and actions.

What method will you use to communicate your understanding and reactions to student feedback?

Be realistic.

Student consultation needs to be planned realistically from the beginning, with particular attention to the time and energy needed for all phases of it.

How can you ensure ongoing support for gathering feedback from students and from whom?

Adapted from: Cook-Sather, A. (2010, August). Through students' eyes. *JSD* (31)4, 44-45. Available online at www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd