

Empathy Interview Planning Protocol



To be human-centered means that your improvement process prioritizes the perspectives and experiences of the people you’re designing for.

When done well, a human-centered approach drives the creation of products and services that resonate more deeply with an audience and, thus, have greater impact. To be human-centered requires teams to diversify and be inclusive. And it means developing empathy for the users in your system. In other words, we need to deeply understand the diverse experiences, motivations, and values of students, families, and educators themselves.

Using an authentic human-centered approach is one way to operationalize our commitment to equity. When we uncover the stories, experiences, and motivations of students and families who have been historically underserved, we design with them at the center. As Tim Brown in *Change by Design* says,

By concentrating solely on the bulge at the center of the bell curve...we are more likely to confirm what we already know than learn something new and surprising. For insights at that level, we need to head to the edges, to the places where we expect to find “extreme” users who live differently, think differently, and consume differently.

In other words, the mission of a human-centered approach is to translate user voice and experience into insights which will then become products, programs, or services that will improve lives.

1. Confirm or adjust your why [3 min]

This round of empathy interviews will collect information: *To learn about needs and conditions for reaching your aim and why gaps exist.*

What do you want to add or change about the why?

2. Who will we interview? [10 min]

Choosing to listen deeply to students, families, and teachers who have been historically marginalized by our systems is a way to operationalize equity. It is important to be intentional about who you include in interviews and be aware of who is not included. If only people with “average” experiences are interviewed, empathy interviews will only confirm what we already know. Also, consider:

- Relationships. When possible, consider an interviewer who already has a trusting relationship with an interviewee.
- Power dynamics. Consider how race, position, age, bias, or gender might play out in an empathy interview setting. Deliberately work to reduce harm.
- Language needs. Include multilingual interviewers or translators on your team.

Each person should interview 1-2 students or 1-2 teachers or 1-2 family members (~20 min) by May 21, 2021

Our notes about who we will interview or how we will choose who to interview (no names!)

3. What questions will we ask? [15 min]

We are aiming for a protocol with just **four questions**. Questions should be open-ended, story-based questions. They should also start with the positive, ask for stories, not solutions, and include options to talk about experience outside of school.

Look at the list of questions below and, as a team, choose four to five you'd like to try. Two of the questions should relate to the overall student experience at your school and two or three should align with the strands you are focused on. Or, you can try writing a new question to add.

Overarching questions about overall **STUDENT EXPERIENCE** of [engagement, feeling affirmed in identity, sense of belonging]

1. Question prompt: Tell me about a place (anywhere in your life) that you can show up as your true or authentic self.
Suggested probes: What is it like? Why do you think... ? How does it feel? How would you describe...?
2. Question prompt: Tell me about a time you weren't as able to show up as your true or authentic self.
Suggested probes: What is it like? Why do you think... ? How does it feel? How would you describe...?
3. Question prompt: Tell me about a time you felt excited to come to school.
Suggested probes: What happened? Tell me more about why that made you feel... Why do you think...
4. Question prompt: Tell me about a time you didn't feel excited to come to school.
Suggested probes: What happened? Tell me more about why that made you feel... Why do you think...

Our final **overall student** interview questions with adaptations (although we may not get to them all):

STUDENT QUESTIONS:

1. Question prompt: Tell me about your plans or dreams for after high school. If you could do anything what would it be and why?
Suggested probes: Tell me more about that. Does it feel attainable? Why?
2. Question prompt: Tell me about a time you felt your post-high school dreams were supported by someone.
Suggested probes: Who was it? How did you know you were supported? What did support feel like and look like?
3. Question prompt: Tell me about a time you felt your post-high school dreams were not supported by someone.

Suggested probes: Why do you think you aren't supported? What did it feel like?

4. Question prompt: Tell me about your experience deciding on your next steps after high school.
Suggested probes: What contributed to that decision? Why? Tell me more? How did you feel about it?
5. What role has your counselor played in your post-secondary planning?
6. Question prompt: Tell me about the best part of starting high school.
Suggested probes: Tell me more about that. Why do you think that was the best part? How did you feel?
7. Question prompt: Tell me about the worst part of starting high school or 9th grade.
Suggested probes: Tell me more about that. What could have made___ better? How did you feel?
8. Question prompt: Tell me about your most rewarding class.
Suggested probes: Why do you think.., tell me more about..., What do you mean by..., How did it make you feel?
9. Question prompt: Tell me about your least most frustrating class.
Suggested probes: Why do you think.., tell me more about..., What do you mean by..., How did it make you feel?
10. Question prompt: Tell me about a time you felt proud of yourself for a grade you received.
Suggested probes: Why did you feel proud? Tell me more about ___.
11. Question prompt: Tell me about a time you were frustrated with a grade you received.
Suggested probes: Why do you think ___? What else happened? How did you feel?

Our final **student** interview questions with adaptations (although we may not get to them all):

1.

FAMILY QUESTIONS:

1. Question prompt: What do you think your student should do after high school?
Suggested probe: Do you think that conflicts with what your student wants? Why? How does that feel?
2. Question prompt: Tell me about a recent time you visited your student's school.

Suggested probe: What was the visit like? How did it feel? Tell me more about...

3. Question prompt: Tell me about a time your student had a great day at school?
Suggested probe: Tell me more about...? Why do you think...? How did it feel?
4. Question prompt: Tell me about a time your student had a bad day at school?
Suggested probe: Tell me more about...? Why do you think...? How did it feel?
5. Question prompt: Tell me about the thing you value most for your student at school?
Suggested probe: What would that look like, sound like, or feel like?

Our final **family** interview questions with adaptations (although we may not get to them all):

TEACHER QUESTIONS:

1. Question prompt: Tell me about a time you tried something new? What was easy about it? What was hard about it?
Suggested probes: Tell me more about... How did you feel? Why?
2. Question prompt: Tell me about a time when you felt inspired to come to work.
Suggested probes: Why do you think... Tell me more about... What do you mean by...
3. Question prompt: Tell me about a time when you didn't feel like coming to work.
Suggested probes: Why do you think... Tell me more about... What do you mean by...
4. Question prompt: Tell me about a time when you felt supported at work.
Suggested probes: What did it feel like? Tell me more about... How would you define...
5. Question prompt: Tell me about a time when you felt discouraged or isolated at work.
Suggested probes: What did it feel like? Tell me more about... How would you define...
6. Question prompt: Tell me about a time when you felt fully prepared to teach a class.
Suggested probes: Why do you think you were prepared? How did it feel? Tell me more.
7. Question prompt: Tell me about a time you didn't feel prepared to teach a class.
Suggested probes: Why do you think you weren't prepared? How did it feel? Tell me more.

8. Question prompt: Tell me about a student you supported as they made decisions and prepared for transitioning to life after high school.
Suggested probes: What did you do? What was their plan? How did you feel?
9. Question prompt: Tell me about a time when you wanted to help a student with their plans for after high school - or help them more - but couldn't.
Suggested probes: Tell me more about it. What were the barriers? What did it feel like?
10. Question prompts: Tell me about a class or teaching experience when you felt connected to students.
Suggested probes: Tell me more about it. What did you do? What did it feel like?
11. Question prompts: Tell me about a class or teaching experience when you didn't feel as connected to students.
Suggested probes: Tell me more about it. What did it feel like?
12. Question prompts: Tell me about a time when your school successfully (or unsuccessfully) implemented a new system or change?

Our final **teacher** interview questions with adaptations (although we may not get to them all):

4. Where will we record our notes? [1 min]

Look for an email next week from your KIPP Foundation Coach with a link to your group's data collection form!

5. Suggested Introduction [5 min]

Read and adjust

STUDENT INTERVIEWS. Thank you so much for agreeing to talk with me today. We are trying to learn more about [your sense of belonging to school, the transition to 9th grade, post-high school goals, the classes you take, other] We will not be recording your name with your response. Instead, we'll be looking across responses of youth like yourself from all over the school to see what we can learn and how to improve. I have only a few questions and most of them ask you to think of a specific example or story. Take as much time as you need before answering. Any question I ask is voluntary to answer and we can stop at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

TEACHER INTERVIEWS. Thank you so much for agreeing to talk with me today. We are trying to learn more about the needed conditions to support teachers with their practice. We will not be recording your name with your response. Instead, we'll be looking across responses of youth like yourself from all over the school to see what we can learn and how to improve. I have only a few questions and most of them ask you to think of a specific example or story. Take as much time as you need before answering. Any question I ask is voluntary to answer and we can stop at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Anything we want to change or add to the suggested student introduction?

Anything we want to change or add to the suggested teacher introduction?

6. Any remaining questions? [3 min]

Please write questions to bring to the group.