

Step 5

Getting Permission from School Officials to Collect Data

Below find correspondence between Bill and a school district official that resulted in an agreement to have teachers allow students complete an on-line survey about the transition between high school and college in their classes. This agreement ensured that the *TfC* class had a very high response rate and a great sample. Of course, you and your students will want to edit these letters to fit your own needs.

1) Initial email to district administrator asking if he would allow teachers in a district high school to administer the survey:

Dear Mr. XXXX,

The Tools for Change seminar that involves high school students from three area high schools is researching the transition from high school to college in the hope it may be helpful for young people in the area.

The students have conducted an extensive literature review and conducted one-on-one interviews to learn about the topic. Based on these insights they have drafted a survey so they can understand the views of high school students in the area. You can review the survey by going to the link below.

The students are leveraging their personal networks to gather responses. The XXXX students have been able to get several teachers to administer the survey during their classes. The XXXX students are also working with teachers and staff. This approach has been very successful.

We would like permission to deploy the survey at your school in the same way. Specifically, it would be great to have an English or History teacher take a few minutes of time to let their students take the survey.

The survey takes less than 10 minutes to complete and can be completed on any device (desktop computer, iPad, cell phone, etc.).

Please let us know how best to proceed. Also, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Tobin at [919-323-5916](tel:919-323-5916), if any questions arise.

Thank you,

Yours,

Link to Survey: <https://goo.gl/forms/pACp0Rs2RySWFICu1>

3) Initial District response:

Dear XXXX,

The committee convened today and reviewed the application as well as the survey provided.

Upon review of the aforementioned documents, there were a few matters that were identified worthy of attention. In particular, a concern that the XXXX school data not be reported disaggregated from the data of the other participating schools (Our students obviously have a very different demographic from the rest of XXX HS students in the area, which may have an influence upon survey results and interpretations). We also would want to be sure any interpretation of the findings should take-into-account that the data was collected in non-randomized ways (i.e. it is our understanding that some students in other high schools may have been selectively chosen, perhaps skewing results in a particular way as opposed to the random selection indicated in your proposal). In essence we are hoping the overall selection process for all survey participants in the sample is fair, equitable and unbiased.

One item of the survey asks: What is your racial or ethnic identification (Select only one)? The committee requests you amend answer option “Hispanic or Latin” to be “Hispanic or Latino”. In general, the committee raised concern around some of the wording of the survey. For example, the use of the terminology ‘gap year’ might be foreign to some students. Finally, a question was raised as to whether informed consent has been provided by parents for participation by minors in this survey.

The matters discussed here notwithstanding, the survey appears to have low risk to students and currently have no objection to it being conducted. We request that those responsible for interpreting and reporting the results to the public are very careful in respecting each district’s unique circumstance and characteristics.

Yours,

4) Response to School District’s concerns:

Dear XXXX,

Thank you for your continued support of the Tools for Change program. We appreciate your concerns and want to reassure you that it is our goal to provide a sound academic experience for the participants within the confines of the brief time we have to engage with your students. We

are doing everything we can to ensure the sample being taken is as representative of all students as possible. We have worked with the participating students to ensure that they understand sources of sampling bias and that we attempt to quantify and adjust for such discrepancies. In fact, the reasons we are asking demographic questions is to ensure our sample is representative of the make-up of each school. Thank you also for pointing out the typo in the question about race/ethnicity. We have corrected that question.

In terms of the analysis of the data, our research objective is to explore the factors believed to shape the transition from high school to college. Some of the factors the participating students believe could be shaping the transition are: grade level, peer influence, economic status, perceptions about college and several other factors. As with any exploratory research, it is impossible for us to know which variables will be important drivers or how the data should be segmented. As a result, it is difficult for us to say we won't look at potential differences among the schools. That being said, we are fully committed to ensure all data and analysis is used in a professional manner and within the appropriate context.

Getting informed consent from parents would be nearly impossible because the survey is anonymous, and respondents are not asked for any personally identifiable information. If the survey involved participating in clinical experimentation, interacting with students directly, providing personally identifiable information, or answering sensitive questions, I would agree that parental consent would be important. Since our study was created by students in a school sanctioned activity, we felt parental consent would be an unnecessary hardship that would basically kill our ability to gather data.

We are very excited to work with you to gather and analyze this data in a way that will be useful to everyone. That being said, we would like to proceed with data collection at the XXXXX High School by having several 10th and 11th grade English teachers set aside 5 minutes of class time to let students take the survey. This would mirror the data collection done in the other schools involved. We are, however, open to any method that would work best for your school.

Finally, we cannot express how much we value the relationships we have developed over the years with your incredible students, teachers, counsellors, and administrators.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions. Bill can be reached at XXX-XXX-XXXX

Thanks again,

5) Follow-up note with the principal about survey logistics:

Dear Principal XXXX

Now that the Tools for Change class has formal approval to disseminate their survey at your High School, we would greatly appreciate your help. We have been able to collect around 250 responses in XXXXX high school by having the XXXX High School English teachers ask their students to complete the survey. To keep data collection somewhat consistent, it would be great

if we could have your teachers write the link on their board and give the students about 5 minutes to do the survey.

Our next Tools for Change class is this Thursday. We would like to have all data collection done prior to this class so we can start do conduct our data analysis. Because this is an online survey, we can continue to accept results until the class meets on Thursday.

Please let us know if you can reach out to the teachers, or if you prefer that we reach out to them in a different way.

Thanks,

