Evaluation of the *Tell Them From Me* Student Survey Trial

Final report

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

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ARTDCONSULTANTS
strategy & evaluation

Acknowledgments

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CESE   Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

DEC   NSW Department of Education and Communities

SRC   Student Representative Council

TLB   The Learning Bar

TTFM   *Tell Them From Me* student survey

Executive summary

The NSW Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation commissioned ARTD to evaluate the *Tell Them From Me* student survey trial in September 2013. This is the second of two reports provided to the Centre. For secondary schools, this second report focuses on participation rates and how information from the first student survey trial is being used by schools and the Department.

The *Tell Them From Me* student survey trial

The *Tell Them From Me* (*TTFM*) student survey aims to provide schools in NSW with an annual snapshot of their students' self-reported social and intellectual engagement at school, which can help to inform annual strategic planning and DEC with information to better understand the factors that influence student outcomes. In August-September 2013, the NSW Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation trialled the *TTFM* student survey in 37 per cent (n=172) of NSW Government secondary schools; a survey that gave 78,588 students the opportunity to provide feedback about their experiences at school. A second survey trial was implemented in Term 1 2014 for the same cohort of secondary schools: eighty-four schools participated, with 42,023 students completing the survey. The second trial was extended to a group of fifty-five primary schools, and 6,701 students from Years 4, 5 and 6 completed the *TTFM* student survey.

The evaluation

This is a formative evaluation that is intended to provide insight and advice for the future implementation of student surveys. Mixed methods were used for the evaluation—surveys, case studies in five schools and semi-structured interviews. For the second phase of the evaluation, primary and secondary principals received different evaluation survey questionnaires. The survey for secondary schools focused on gathering high level information about how *TTFM* student survey data collected in the first trial has been used in the school and collected relatively little information on implementation. The primary school evaluation survey questionnaire gathered information about these schools' experiences in implementing the *TTFM* student survey. The high response rate to the evaluation surveys means the evaluators are confident that the findings are representative of schools involved in the student survey trial.

Findings

Secondary and primary schools achieved high rates of student participation in the second trial—68 per cent of the student population at participating secondary schools and 85 per cent of student population of Years 4, 5, 6 at primary schools. Just under half of schools in the first trial of the trial also participated in the second trial. The most common reasons given for not participating again were the high level of resources

needed to implement the *TTFM* student survey and competing priorities; especially an issue for medium to large schools given the relatively short time period between surveys. Just seven schools declined to participate because they were disappointed with the experience of the first trial or because the *TTFM* student survey results did not meet their expectations.

Primary schools encountered few challenges implementing the TTFM student survey for the first time

Factors that assisted primary schools to implement the *TTFM* student survey were very similar to those described by secondary schools; the most influential being the cooperation of classroom teachers and having a dedicated team to coordinate the delivery. Only a small proportion of primary schools experienced challenges, with just 14 per cent identifying the management of school logistics and nine per cent the allocation of usernames and passwords. Primary schools, perhaps because of their smaller student populations, reported using fewer resources than secondary schools to deliver the student survey. Just over two-thirds of schools (69%) report that the *TTFM* student survey was implemented with less than 20 hours of staff time.

Lessons from implementing the TTFM student survey for a second time

Secondary schools refined their planning processes for the second trial, and consequently achieved a higher rate of student participation than for the first trial. New lessons for schools emerged, in particular that to sustain interest and participation in the *TTFM* student survey amongst students, schools should share the results of the survey and how these are being used with students as well as the rest of the school community. Another lesson is the importance of explaining how individual student's privacy is being safe guarded and about the nature of the survey beforehand, especially about the personal nature of some questions. Without these measures the evidence indicates there is a risk that some students will not answer personal questions honestly or become distressed and students and schools will become disengaged from the survey. The findings also indicate that there may be a case for reviewing and improving the language and terminology used in some survey questions.

Schools are using the results to identify areas for improvement and some have already made changes

The *TTFM* student survey has provided enough new and interesting information about student engagement at schools to open up fresh discussions and investigations about school practices and what can be done differently to improve students' experience of school and their academic and social outcomes. A wide range of strategies related to school policy on student wellbeing, student engagement (social, intellectual and institutional) and effective teaching strategies have been introduced or refreshed and strengthened in schools following the first survey trial.

The TTFM student survey has the capacity to provide DEC with data to measure drivers of school performance

The *TTFM* student survey data is proving to be a valuable source of data about students for the Department of Education and Communities and has already given policy makers new insights into the drivers of school performance not available on this scale previously. *TTFM* data have allowed the linking of self-reported student data on social and intellectual engagement to the performance data provided by NAPLAN and HSC results. This provides a new level of systematic information about the relationship between students' sense of belonging and engagement in learning with academic outcomes. It opens a window onto what drives these outcomes for particular groups of students under different circumstances. The Department has already identified a number of policy interests that may be further explored using these data and the need for ongoing participation by schools across the state.

Participation in future TTFM student surveys

Both secondary and primary schools are interested in continuing to conduct *TTFM* at their schools. However, the results indicate that a future possible cost of ⬚ is likely to be a barrier to primary schools implementing the student survey, especially small ones. The most favoured timing for *TTFM* student surveys is said to be Term 3, although the 2013 experience showed that this can impact the involvement of senior students who are taking or preparing for exams. School informants also considered Term 1 a suitable time for *TTFM*. Secondary principals would like to add topics of interest to future surveys, but fewer primary principals are interested in this option. Both secondary and primary principals are interested conducting similar surveys for teachers and for parents.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report

This is the second report for the evaluation. It examines how the results of the student survey trial have been used by schools to implement school improvement strategies and the capacity of the student survey to provide DEC with data to measure drivers of school performance. It also reports on the implementation of the second student survey trial in Term 1, 2014. The second trial was implemented by 84 of the 172 high schools involved in the trial.

1.2 Background

In July 2013 the Department of Education and Communities (DEC) engaged The Learning Bar (TLB) to trial the *TTFM* student survey across a sample of NSW secondary schools. Schools made an Expression of Interest to the department to be involved, and all who did so were able to participate in the trial during Term 3, 2013. Participating schools did not need to pay for the survey trial, but were asked to allocate in-kind support to maximise student participation and also to contribute towards the evaluation of the trial.

Initial survey results are provided online to schools within a few days. At a later stage, schools are able to access comparative data with a 'replica school' created from the database of combined results and matching the demographics of their school.

The survey results are intended to help schools identify areas for improvement and thus inform school planning. DEC will also use the information to help inform future policy decisions. The *TTFM* data set is being linked to student outcomes data and analysed by the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) to provide greater understanding of the drivers of student performance and student perceptions of effective teaching practice.

1.3 *TTFM* student survey framework

The *TTFM* student survey asks students questions across a range of topic areas that explore social-emotional outcomes, academic outcomes and the drivers of student outcomes. It also collects a limited amount of demographic information so that answers can be explored for different groups of students (see Figure 1). This trial of the *TTFM* student survey did not include open questions.

Students self-report their current results in one academic subject area (English, Maths or Science), and the classroom context of instruction in that subject. Subject areas are randomly allocated to students and are not reported on individually, but are combined

to give a picture of student engagement across the whole school. Student answers are aggregated to form measures of the areas as outlined in the framework shown in Figure 1. It is these measures that schools are able to generate reports on, and not on the questions themselves.

Figure 1. *TTFM* **topic framework, NSW Trial Secondary Schools 2013**

Social-Emotional Outcomes

Social Engagement
- Participate Sports
- Participate Clubs
- Sense of Belonging
- Positive Relationships

Institutional Engagement
- Values School Outcomes
- Truancy
- Homework Behaviour
- Behaviour at School

Intellectual Engagement
- Intellectual Engagement Composite
- Interest and Motivation
- Effort
- Skills (Grades)-Challenge

Emotional Health
- Anxiety
- Depression

Academic Outcomes
- English
- Maths
- Science

Demographic Factors

Replica School
- Sex
- Socio-economic factors
- Immigrant Status
- Aboriginal Status

DRIVERS of Student Outcomes

Quality Instruction
- Effective Learning Time
- Relevance
- Rigour

School Context
- Bully-Victim
- Advocacy at School

Classroom Context
- Positive Teacher-Student Relations
- Positive Learning Climate
- Expectations for Success

Family Context
- Advocacy outside of School
- Aspirations - Finish High School
- Aspirations - Pursue Trade
- Aspirations - University

1.4 Profile of schools participating in the NSW Trial of the *TTFM* student surveys

For the first *TTFM* student survey trial in 2013, all schools who applied to participate were able to do so. In total, 172 secondary schools took part in the *TTFM* survey trial, which is 37 per cent of NSW Government secondary schools. A sampling frame reflecting the demographics of state high schools across NSW was used in CESE analysis to weight the responses to reflect all DEC schools and produce NSW norms presented to schools in the *TTFM* portal. When the *TTFM* survey was trialled a second time in 2014, a small sample of 55 primary schools was included, which is 3.4 per cent of the total number of NSW Government primary schools.

The demographics used for analysis are location (metropolitan, provincial or remote), socio-economic status, and size of school. Socio-economic status is based on the Index of

Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)[1] 2012 rating and quartile range. Secondary schools were divided into three SES groups and primary schools into just two groups. For secondary schools, size is defined as small for those with fewer than 300 students, medium-sized for student populations between 300 and 799, and large if there are 800 or more students. Primary schools were divided into two groups: those with up to 100 students (none had fewer than 40 students) and those with more than 100 students.

Compared to all NSW Government secondary schools, metropolitan schools were over-represented as were larger ones. Almost two thirds of the participating secondary schools were based in a metropolitan area (cf. 58% of government secondary schools) and 44 per cent had 800 or more students (cf. 36% of government secondary schools). The socio-economic profile of *TTFM* student survey trial secondary schools and all government secondary schools was similar.

The sample of primary schools reflected the location and socio-economic profile of all government primary schools quite accurately. The larger schools are slightly over-represented, with 75 per cent of the sample having more than 100 students, compared with 70 per cent of government primary schools.

1.5 Main findings from phase 1 of the evaluation of the *TTFM*

The phase 1 evaluation findings are based on surveys of principals of the schools involved and their teaching staff who either coordinated or administered the *TTFM* student survey.

Most schools (70%) chose to give all students the opportunity to complete a *TTFM* student survey with the common exception of Year 11 and/or Year 12 students, many of whom had exam commitments. Those schools who chose to select certain Year groups of students did so to manage logistical constraints or because the school planning was focusing on these years.

A high proportion of the school staff who coordinated the *TTFM* student survey implementation (76%) indicated that most students were positive about participating in the *TTFM* student survey trial. However, 20 per cent of principals reported that garnering student cooperation was a significant implementation challenge. Completion of the student survey was voluntary, and schools maximised student participation through effective communication and promotion of the survey, and careful logistical planning of resources. Most schools had teams of between three to six people working on the survey, and a conservative estimate of the total number of hours invested by a school was between 20 and 80 hours for most schools.

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[1] ICSEA is a scale that represents levels of educational advantage based on family background data. A value on the scale assigned to a school is the average level for all students in the particular school. Values have a national mean of 1000 and range from around 500 (extremely educationally disadvantaged backgrounds) to about 1300 (representing schools with students with very educationally advantaged backgrounds) http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/Guide_to_understanding_2012_ICSEA_values.pdf

1.5.1   Factors affecting implementation

According to the teaching staff coordinating the first trial of the *TTFM* student survey it was easy or very easy to implement, although individual staff and schools did highlight a variety of minor challenges. Factors that appear to have given schools the greatest assistance in implementing the student survey were the webinar training, having a dedicated project team and the cooperation and support of classroom teachers. The main challenges were managing the logistics of student access to computers so they could complete the survey, providing students with user names and passwords and other technical problems such as surveys timing out and the website being slow to load.

1.5.2   Early views about the value of the *TTFM* student survey for schools

Most principals and coordinators expected the student survey to provide new and interesting/ valuable information about school engagement, intellectual engagement, students' emotional health and classroom context.

Principals commonly nominated the following ways they intend to use the student data: to engage students both intellectually and socially; in strategic planning; to improve school welfare systems; to plan new initiatives to meet the needs of certain groups; and, to plan professional learning programs for staff. More than two thirds of principals are intending to share the student survey data with teaching staff, the school Parents and Citizens group and with students. Just 38 per cent of principals intend to share the data with the broader parent community. One common limitation about the usefulness of the student survey data were the references and comparisons to Canadian data with some school principals saying the norm should exclude these data and only use NSW school data. The second phase of the evaluation confirms that principals had an accurate view of the usefulness of the student data.

2. Evaluation

This chapter describes the purpose and scope of the evaluation and the methods used. The evaluation collected data by surveying principals in all schools participating in the *TTFM* student survey trial, through visits to five high schools where we spoke with staff and students about the student survey, and stakeholder interviews with DEC.

2.1 Purpose and scope of phase 2 of the evaluation

ARTD Consultants were engaged by DEC to evaluate the implementation of the *TTFM* student survey trial in September 2013. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the implementation of the student survey trial and its capacity to provide school principals with the data they need for school improvement planning. It also assesses the survey's capacity to provide DEC with data to measure drivers of school performance. Phase 1 looked at the reach, implementation and capacity of the survey to provide principals with data for school planning. The main findings are summarised in section 1.5.

For the second trial, the scope of the student survey (and hence the evaluation) was increased to include fifty-five primary schools. These schools implemented the survey for the first time in Term 1 2014 with their students from Years 4, 5 and 6.

2.1.1 Evaluation questions

The second phase of the evaluation contributes to an understanding of the following evaluation questions:

- **What is the capacity of the survey to provide DEC with data to measure drivers of school performance?**
  - To what extent does the tool enable timely analysis of critical questions such as the effect of teaching practices, student wellbeing and engagement on student performance?

- **For secondary schools:**
  - What are the number and characteristics of schools that applied to participate in the second student survey trial proposed for Term 1, 2014?
  - How have the results of the survey trial been used by schools over the past few months to identify areas for improvement?
  - How did schools identify and implement appropriate and effective strategies to increase school engagement and effective teaching?
  - What (if any) were the unintended consequences (positive or negative) of the student survey trial for schools?
  - For those who did not participate in a second trial, what was the rationale for that choice?

- **For primary schools implementing the survey for the first time:**
  - What factors enable implementation?
  - What factors challenge/ inhibit implementation?
  - What were the costs to schools of implementation?
  - How will the results be used by schools to identify areas for improvement?
  - Would the school recommend that other schools participate in the student survey?
  - Would the school participate in another student survey?

2.2   Methods

Mixed methods were used for this second phase of the evaluation: stakeholder interviews, case study visits and online surveys of principals.

2.2.1   Stakeholder interviews

Four DEC key informants were interviewed in person about the contribution of the student survey to evidence-based policy development. The interviews used a semi-structured interview guide.

2.2.2   Case studies of five schools.

Case study schools were selected by DEC and were visited during May and June 2013. Four schools were based in metropolitan areas and one in a rural location. At each of the schools, we held interviews with the principal, the student survey coordinator, a small group of teachers and also conducted two focus groups with students, one with junior students (Years 7 to 9) and the other with senior students (Years 10 to 12). Altogether we spoke with five principals, five survey coordinators, twelve teachers (usually Year Advisors) and fifty-seven students.

In our student focus groups we spoke with 34 senior students (16 female and 16 male) and 23 junior students (12 female, 11 male) about their experience and views of the *TTFM* survey. This small sample of students was not expected to be representative of all students, apart from including male and female and senior and junior students. For the most part they were leaders within their schools, sometimes with an involvement in the analysis or presentation of results. They were articulate and willing and able to express their personal views about the experience of undertaking the survey and its perceived value for them and other students.

2.2.3   Online evaluation surveys of principals

Online surveys were developed in consultation with DEC, for high school principals and for primary school principals. The surveys were designed to be concise and purposeful. The survey for high school principals had fourteen questions, mostly closed, with four open questions. The survey for primary school principals had 23 questions, mostly closed, with three open questions. The online surveys were delivered via email on 19th

May 2014. The surveys closed on 6th June 2014 after four reminder messages to maximise the responses. See Appendix 1 for questions and responses.

2.2.4 Response rates for evaluation surveys conducted following the *TTFM* student survey trial in Term 1 2014

All school principals were asked to participate irrespective of whether they took up the offer of a second *TTFM* student survey. Final response rates for the surveys were quite high. Responses were received from 61 per cent of high school principals and from 64 per cent of primary school principals. However, just under half of secondary schools who did not participate in the second *TTFM* student survey responded to the evaluation survey.

Table 1.   Evaluation survey response rates

Survey group	Distributed	Responses	Per cent
Primary school principal survey	55	35	64%
Secondary school principal survey	169*	103	61%
Participated in 2nd student survey	84	62	76%
Did not participate in 2nd student survey	85	41	47%

Note: While 172 schools are involved, 169 were surveyed, since campuses with the same principal were only surveyed once. One school that was affected by bushfires at the time of the survey was excluded from the sample.

The evaluation survey respondents were analysed across the demographic categories of location, socio-economic status and school size (described in section 1.5) (see Table 2 and Table 3).

Table 2.   Secondary school demographics for all NSW government schools, *TTFM* sample and evaluation survey responses

		NSW totals		*First TTFM* trial		*Evaluation survey 2013*		Second *TTFM* trial		*Evaluation survey 2014*	
		n	per cent	n	per cent	n	per cent	n	per cent	n	per cent
Location	Metropolitan	268	58%	112	65%	76	65%	59	70%	40	69%
	Provincial	174	38%	56	33%	39	33%	23	27%	17	29%
	Remote	21	5%	4	2%	2	2%	2	2%	1	2%
	TOTAL	463	100%	172	100%	117	100%	84	100%	58	100%
SES	Low SES	115	25%	41	24%	27	23%	21	26%	15	26%
	Mid SES	232	50%	86	51%	61	53%	41	50%	30	52%
	High SES	116	25%	41	24%	28	24%	20	24%	13	22%
	TOTAL	463	100%	168	100%	116	100%	82	100%	58	100%
	No data			4		1		2			
Size	Fewer than 300	96	21%	27	16%	19	16%	11	13%	5	9%
	300 to 799	200	43%	69	40%	45	38%	34	40%	28	48%
	800 and above	167	36%	76	44%	53	45%	39	46%	25	43%
	TOTAL	463	100%	172	100%	117	100%	84	100%	58	100%

Source: DEC school data and ARTD principal survey responses. SES is based on ICSEA ratings. Four schools were not given an ICSEA rating by ACARIA.

Table 3.   Primary school demographics for all NSW government schools, *TTFM* sample and evaluation survey responses

		NSW totals		*TTFM* trial		*Evaluation survey*	
		n	per cent	n	per cent	n	per cent
Location	Metropolitan	906	57%	31	56%	19	54%
	Provincial	661	41%	23	42%	16	46%
	Remote	33	2%	1	2%	0	0%
	TOTAL	1600	100%	55	100%	35	100%
SES	Low SES	703	44%	23	42%	20	57%
	High SES	897	56%	32	58%	15	43%
	TOTAL	1600	100%	55	100%	35	100%
Size	100 and below	478	30%	14	25%	10	29%
	More than 100	1122	70%	41	75%	25	71%
	TOTAL	1600	100%	55	100%	35	100%

Source: DEC school data and ARTD principal survey responses.
Note: Low SES is schools with ICSEA score <1,000. High SES is schools with an ICSEA score of 1,000 or more.

Half of the secondary schools who participated in 2013 did not participate a second time during Term 1 2014. While all demographic groups were well represented, a smaller proportion of provincial schools and small schools participated the second time (see Table 2).

Just under half of non-participants responded to the evaluation survey and offered reasons for not participating in *TTFM* in 2014. All demographic groups are represented in the responses, apart from remote schools. Comparing respondents to those who did not reply to the survey shows a higher response from metropolitan schools (66% cf. 57%), medium sized schools (44% cf. 34%) and high SES schools (32% cf. 19%) (see Table 4).

Table 4.   Comparison of respondents to second phase evaluation survey

		Participated in 2nd *TTFM* trial		Did not participate in 2nd *TTFM* trial		Not in 2nd *TTFM:* Replied to evaluation survey		Not in 2nd *TTFM:* Did not reply to evaluation survey	
		n	**per cent**	**n**	**per cent**	**n**	**per cent**	**n**	**per cent**
Location	Metropolitan	59	70%	53	60%	27	66%	25	57%
	Provincial	23	27%	33	38%	14	34%	17	39%
	Remote	2	2%	2	2%	0	0%	2	5%
	TOTAL	84	100%	88	100%	41	100%	44	100%
SES	Low SES	21	26%	20	23%	9	22%	11	26%
	Mid SES	41	50%	45	52%	19	46%	23	55%
	High SES	20	24%	21	24%	13	32%	8	19%
	TOTAL	82	100%	86	100%	41	100%	42	100%
	No data	2		2				2	
Size	Fewer than 300	11	13%	16	18%	5	12%	11	25%
	300 to 799	34	40%	35	40%	18	44%	15	34%
	800 and above	39	46%	37	42%	18	44%	18	41%
	TOTAL	84	100%	88	100%	41	100%	44	100%

Source: DEC school data and ARTD principal survey responses. The evaluation survey was not sent to schools with the same principal. One school effected by bushfires was excluded from the sample.

There were some minor differences in viewpoint found across the demographic groups and these are noted in the relevant section of the report.

2.2.5   Strength of the evidence

We are confident that the survey findings are generalizable and provide a sound basis for the conclusions in this report. Our confidence is based on the high response rate to the evaluation surveys and because the evaluation survey respondents' school profiles were similar to all schools that participated in the *TTFM* student survey.

The case studies and other interviews were all completed as planned and the information collected using these methods affirmed the patterns of findings from the evaluation surveys, whilst providing a more in-depth picture of how schools implement the *TTFM* student survey and are using the resultant data.

3.   Use of the *TTFM* data for planning and policy

The *TTFM* results are intended to help inform DEC about drivers of student performance that can be used to develop effective state-wide policy. This chapter addresses the evaluation question, "What is the capacity of the survey to provide DEC with data to measure drivers of school performance?"

3.1   *TTFM* data contributes new information to evidence-based policy

DEC stakeholders report that the student survey is providing useful evidence for planning and policy. Schools and the Department have a focus on evidence based policy. In the education context it can be challenging to find robust evidence on the drivers of student outcomes. International studies provide some evidence from which Australia can draw lessons, but the contexts vary in ways that often undermine direct comparison. State-wide student performance data is provided by NAPLAN and HSC results. This data cannot be analysed easily to find levers for schools to bring improvement.

The new approach offered by *TTFM* is the linking of self-reported student data on social and intellectual engagement that is not available elsewhere on a large scale to the performance data provided by NAPLAN and HSC results. This provides a new level of systematic information about the relationship between students' sense of belonging and engagement in learning with academic outcomes. It opens a window onto what drives these outcomes for particular groups of students under different circumstances. The Department has already identified a number of policy interests that may be informed by the *TTFM* data, including:

- the factors impacting on student performance
- the correlation between student outcomes and students' experiences of teaching practices
- what student engagement means and its relationship to student performance
- what makes an effective school from students' perspective
- whether explicit structured teaching practices being experienced equally across different SES levels.

3.2   *TTFM* student survey is already providing useful insights

Even with only one round of data collection, the *TTFM* student survey is providing interesting clues into the nature of issues and informing a preliminary sense of potential strategies to address these. The Department expects that within six months' as more data are collected and analysed, this understanding will be significantly advanced with the potential for even greater understanding over time as the body of evidence increases.

At the current level of analysis, DEC reports there are already some interesting findings about a different relationship between organisational engagement and outcomes based on gender. There are some interesting results for Year 9 students. Some findings relate to student expectations and the best time to begin intervening and giving guidance to students about their aspirations for after they leave school. The Department is also investigating the application and effectiveness of structured and explicit teaching on student performance.

3.3   Ongoing participation by a high proportion of schools is needed

For DEC to have a robust, representative sample of student results to analyse there needs to be ongoing participation in *TTFM* from a high proportion of NSW schools. At a minimum, DEC would like to see yearly involvement from over 200 high schools and 500 primary schools, in order to develop a reliable long-term database of evidence. For this reason it is imperative that *TTFM* be relevant to schools for their own annual strategic planning. This question is explored further in Chapter 5.

4. Participation in the second *TTFM* student survey trial

This chapter addresses two evaluation questions

- What are the number and characteristics of secondary schools that applied to participate in the second student survey trial in Term 1, 2014?
- For those who did not participate in the second trial, what was the rationale for that choice?

The chapter also describes the resources used to achieve the levels of student participation and students' experiences of participating in the survey.

4.1 Profile of participating secondary schools

A total of 84 secondary schools participated in the second *TTFM* student survey trial; these schools also implemented the first *TTFM* student survey. This is just under half of the schools who participated in the first survey trial in 2013. The majority of schools in the second trial were located in metropolitan areas (70%) and their students were from mid (50%) or high (24%) socio-economic status backgrounds. Most schools had either 300 to 799 students (40%) or 800 or above students (46%).

Compared to the profile of schools who participated in the first *TTFM* trial, a slightly higher proportion of metropolitan schools are represented in the second trial (70% cf. 65%). (See Table 2)

4.2 Profile of participating students

The second *TTFM* student survey trial was completed by 42,023 secondary students, which is 68 per cent of the student population at the participating schools. This is 6 per cent higher than achieved in the first *TTFM* student survey trial.

4.2.1 Selection of students

Most schools (96%) invited all students to participate in *TTFM*, according to coordinators, a large increase from the first trial where 70 per cent did so. Two schools surveyed only Years 7 to 10, and one school surveyed only Years 11 and 12.

4.2.2 Student response rates from secondary schools

The student response rates for all students show that more than half (53%) of participating secondary schools attained a response rate of over 70 per cent (see Figure 2) in the *TTFM* student survey, and a median response rate of 71 per cent. For two

schools there is no data on the size of the school, so response rates could not be calculated. These response rates are higher than achieved for the first trial, where 42 per cent of schools attained a response rate of over 70 percent.

Figure 2. *TTFM* **response rates for secondary schools 2014, n=82**
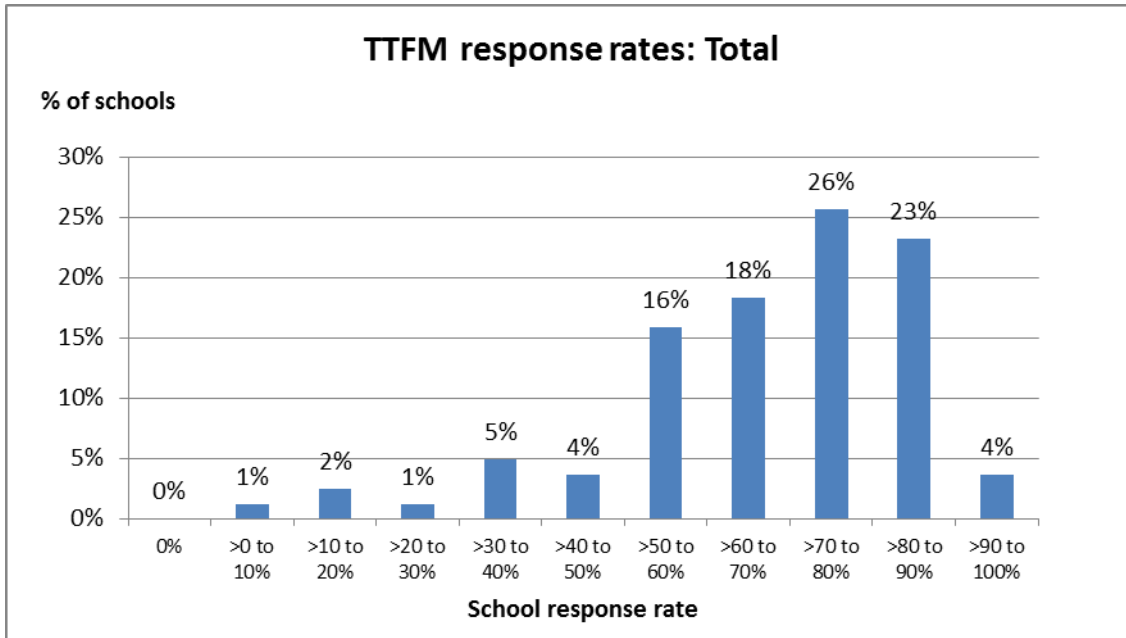
Source: CESE

Disaggregating the response rates for junior and senior secondary students shows the differences between these two groups, with response rates higher amongst junior secondary students. Fifty-three per cent of schools achieved a response rate of over 70 per cent from students in Years 7 to 10 (see Figure 3), and the median response rate was 79 per cent per school. By contrast, around one third of secondary schools achieved a response rate of over 70 per cent from senior students. The median response rate for these students was 58 per cent per school (see Figure 4).

Figure 3. *TTFM* **response rates for Years 7 to 10 2014, n=81**
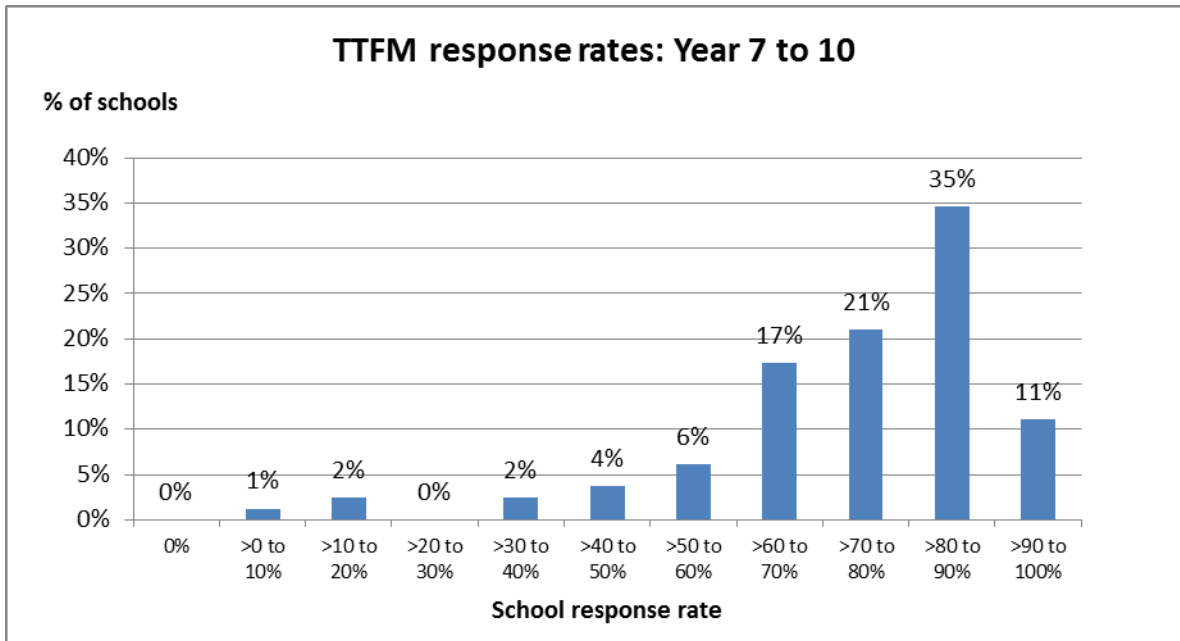
Source: CESE

Figure 4. *TTFM* **response rates for Years 11 and 12 2014, n=80**
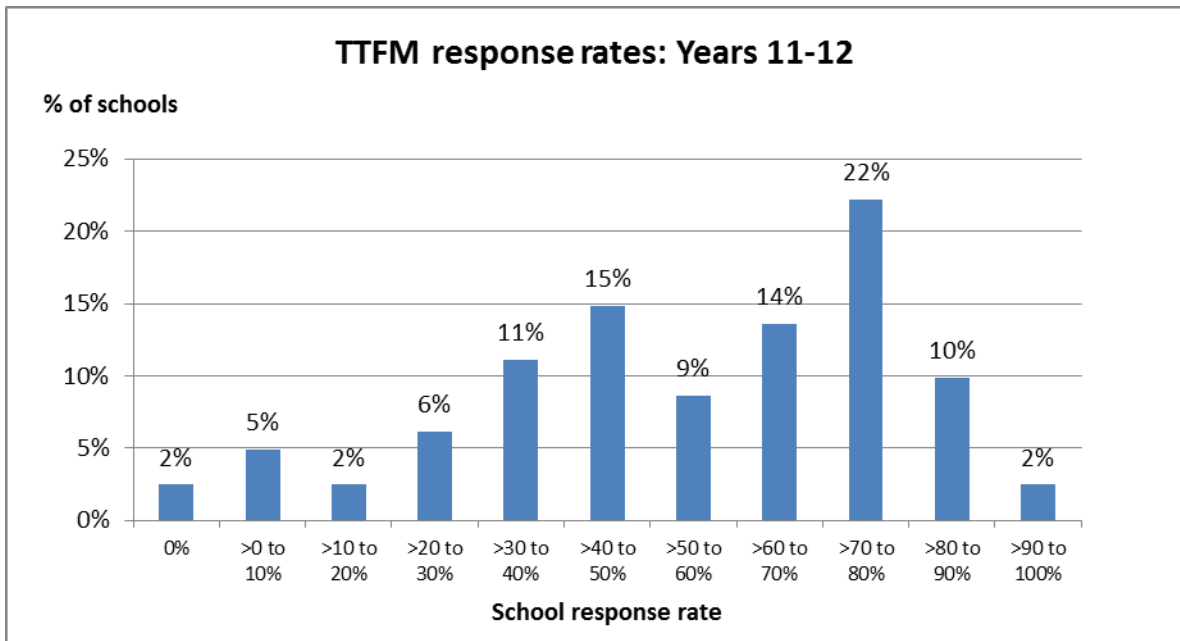
Source: CESE

4.2.3   Strategies to maximise student participation

The case studies provide evidence about ways schools attempted to maximise student participation in the second *TTFM* student survey trial. For the most part, these were very similar to the strategies described by coordinators in the evaluation survey for the first *TTFM* student survey. However, schools did adjust their strategies based on their initial experiences. Across the two trials the completion of the student survey was voluntary, and schools maximised student participation by communicating with staff members, students and parents and by careful logistical planning of resources. Schools were cognisant of keeping students and parents engaged for the second student survey. As such, some of the case study schools put a greater emphasis on promoting the survey to students and parents. For example, one rural school with a relatively high population of Aboriginal students actively and successfully promoted the survey to parents and the wider community through visits by the Aboriginal Education Officer to some families to explain more about the survey and to respond to any concerns and by updating the school app and website.

Another very effective strategy used by two case study schools was to involve students in the analysis of the first student survey data and to

Box 4.1 Promoting the second survey

Students at High School D were told about the *TTFM* survey in whole school and Year group assemblies. Year advisors on the implementation team described the *TTFM* survey as an opportunity for students to let the school know how it can provide better resources to students. They were also given a letter to take home to parents, allowing them to opt-out of the survey.

Staff realised that, in 2014, some students were not engaged in doing the survey again because they had not yet heard results from 2013. This was addressed in a Year meeting when the school's plan to set up focus groups for students was introduced. To boost the engagement of Year 12 students, their Year advisor also emphasised that the survey provides a way for them to give feedback before they leave to make the school better in the future.

Details of the purpose and implementation strategy for the survey were outlined to teachers at a staff meeting and in meetings with executive staff. The survey coordinator explained that, '*As we have a very busy school, it was important that I was proactive and the survey was promoted so that it did not become "just another thing" to do.*' In addition to communicating with teachers, the principal explained that teachers are already familiar with survey processes like this: the faculty reviews include student's giving feedback on subjects, for example.

The parent and wider school community were informed of the survey. It was discussed with the School Council and at P&C meetings: both groups were supportive of collecting this data and trusted the decision of the school executive to use the *TTFM* survey. The school newsletter, website and app also hosted information promoting the survey and explaining its importance to school planning.

ensure that the student body was aware of how the school intended to use the results of the first *TTFM* student survey (Box 1). Students in focus groups indicated that they were happy to participate, especially where there is a benefit for students and the school.

4.3   Secondary schools' commitment of resources

As was found in the evaluation report for the first *TTFM* student survey trial, case study schools described taking a very collegiate approach to managing and administering the survey. Schools tended to establish an implementation team led by a designated staff member, usually a senior executive.

Principals provided an estimate of the total cumulative hours for all staff members to implement the survey, including planning, administration of the survey and analysis/ reporting (see Table 5). Close to one-third of schools report the survey was implemented in under 20 hours (31%); from between 20 to 39 hours (30%); and between 40 and 59 hours (28%). Seven schools reported spending more than 60 hours to implement the survey. These schools tended to be large schools (more than 800 students) and be located in a metropolitan area. Six of the seven schools were metropolitan and five were large schools. We are unable to directly compare the number of hours spent for the first *TTFM* student survey because different approaches were used to collect these data. However, the first evaluation report concluded that "Given that most schools have teams of between three to six people, the total number of hours invested by a school may be conservatively estimated at between 20 and 80 hours for most schools."

Table 5.   Hours taken to implement the *TTFM* survey in high schools

Total hours	n	%
Less than 20 hours	19	31%
20 to 39 hours	18	30%
40 to 59 hours	17	28%
60 to 79 hours	4	7%
80 to 99 hours	2	3%
100 or more hours	1	2%
TOTAL	61	100%
No data	1	

4.4   Students' experiences of the *TTFM* student survey

Students in the case study schools expressed a range of attitudes towards the *TTFM* student survey, from having no strong feelings to finding it a positive experience to being somewhat uncomfortable about answering personal questions about themselves or their parents. Senior students tended to have found the experience a positive one, with these students more likely to express opinions about the survey being valuable

because it means the student "voice" can be heard by their school. A couple of senior students also valued the insights the survey gave them into their own study routines and behaviours. Younger students were more likely to have a neutral viewpoint, although like older students they expressed interest in the findings. Some students were interested to know if their own personal experiences were similar to others.

The sharing of results with students varied greatly between the schools, from not at all to selected results shared with some groups of students, to selected student involvement in the analysis of results.

Overall, students were willing to the survey every year if there was evidence that the school listened to the student voice and took action. They could appreciate the potential benefits for the school in having a better understanding of students' situations and views. In discussing the survey they expressed an interest in knowing more about the results, and thought that this would also increase student interest in participating each year.

Answering personal questions

Some students expressed a degree of discomfort about the personal nature of some questions about themselves and their parents. Some felt these questions were unexpected and students indicated that they might have felt more comfortable answering these if they had been forewarned. Younger students especially, expressed doubts about whether all their peers had answered these questions honestly, largely because of concerns about privacy. These students felt there was a risk that their answers could be read by others off the computer screen or that teachers might see their responses. Students felt this way even though teachers indicated that schools had assured students their answers would be kept confidential. One student described seeing her peers randomly answer these questions, rather than thinking about them and answering truthfully. In one case study school, once students realised that individual passwords were connected to unique log-ins, rumours appeared about teachers being able to look at individuals' responses. Older students commonly had a better understanding of how their privacy was being protected and were confident their peers took care to answer these honestly.

The case studies also raised an issue about the potential for some questions of a personal nature to trigger strong emotional reactions amongst vulnerable students. For example, in one school, a group of senior students chose not to complete the survey when some students became distressed because of questions that related to a recent incident at the school. A few students also said either themselves or a peer had found questions about their parents distressing because of family break-up or where a parent had died.

Difficulties understanding or answering certain types of questions

Although students commonly indicated that the survey was relatively easy to answer, younger students especially talked about either themselves or others finding some questions difficult to understand because of the language used or the limited response options. These types of questions are:

- Questions that use unfamiliar terminology:
    - Canadian terms that are not used in NSW e.g. "school clubs"
    - Grade averages
- Questions that use unfamiliar language about their subjects for example, not understanding what a "focus on writing" in their English lessons meant
- Questions where the response options were limiting or ambiguous. For example, asking about the frequency of doing an activity, such as eating breakfast, or truancy.
- Questions about teachers where a student has lots of teachers
- Questions relating to parents, which did not accommodate different family circumstances
- Questions where the response logic did not make sense for their circumstances for example, questions about science where the student was not studying this subject or was doing multiple science subjects.

Where students did not understand a question they reported asking for help from their teachers. One student said they found the teacher's explanation unhelpful and so chose the middle response at random. A few students reported being "tripped up" when the response logic order was changed and then being unable to change their responses when they realised their error.

Additional questions or other improvements

Where students suggested additional questions, their suggestions were for new questions covering students' goals and aspirations for their career paths or views on elective subjects.

4.5 Reasons secondary schools did not participate in the second trial

Respondents to the open question asking for the reason they had not participated in the second *TTFM* trial said that the timing of the survey had a big influence on their decision not to participate in 2014, along with the competing demands of other priorities and resource constraints. Several indicated their intention to participate in future surveys. A small number said that the first survey had not met their expectations.

The second trial was too close to the first one

Many respondents (n=17), from across all demographic groups, said that their reason for not participating in the second *TTFM* survey trial was the relatively short period of

time between the two trials. Several of these said that they were working with the data from the first survey and did not see the need to re-survey students at this stage, although they will in the future.

> *We didn't feel there was enough time between surveys to get an appropriate difference of response from the respondents. (Metropolitan; medium size; mid-SES)*

> *We felt as a school it was too close to the date of the first. If it was 12 months apart, it would have been more beneficial to see what we learnt and [if what was] implemented from the last survey is working. (Provincial; medium size; mid-SES)*

> *It was too early in the year which would be less than two terms after the first survey. We would have participated if it had been at the same time as last year. (Provincial; small size; mid SES)*

Time constraints

Time constraints and competing priorities were cited by several respondents (n=9), mostly from metropolitan areas.

> *The school was engaged in many other surveys and activities at that time. (Metropolitan; large size; high SES)*

> *Main reason was time constraints, although we were still working our way through the results of the 2013 survey and implementing programs in light of these results. (Metropolitan; large size; high SES)*

> *We did not have the time to coordinate it and run it. (Provincial; medium size; mid SES)*

A number of others (n=6) commented that they had found the survey very time consuming to coordinate the first time and this was a factor in deciding not to participate in the second trial.

> *It was too time consuming to coordinate all of the room swaps to get students into the computer labs. Also, the thought of getting individual student log-ins for our 1500 students was daunting. (Metropolitan; large size; high SES)*

> *The first survey was too time consuming and we found it cumbersome to administer. (Metropolitan; medium size; low SES)*

One large metropolitan school commented on the need to properly plan and administer the survey. They made some errors in the set-up and administration of the first survey which has had an impact on their data.

> *When doing it again it will need to be a far more controlled setting up of the information given to students and how the survey is administered. We made the mistake of trying for numbers to have completed rather than getting a good sample and making sure the students had the correct information as to the survey and what it was for. (Metropolitan; large size; high SES)*

Lack of staff resources to administer the survey

Some schools (n=7) did not participate due to changes in their staff which meant that the expertise gained from administering the first survey was not available during Term 1 this year.

> *I had a number of key staff retire and so many executive were in relieving positions. (Metropolitan; large size; high SES; large)*

> *Significant changes to staff from last year; including those that facilitated the first survey. (Provincial; small size; mid SES)*

Other reasons

A small number of schools (n=4) provided other reasons for not participating, sometimes in addition to time restraints. These were:

- the survey did not meet expectations, and some questions were a source of distress to some students
- questions in the first survey were not suited for students from a language background other than English
- the survey had not given them new information, and the results were compared to Canadian experience, and
- a lack of student interest.

4.6 Conclusion

Implementing the student survey is a significant logistical exercise for most schools and requires an investment of staff resources and a team approach to planning. The larger the school the greater the resources needed and the more likely schools are to be juggling competing priorities. Given the resources needed and the many demands on school time, the evidence suggests that schools will be most comfortable with student surveys implemented at twelve-month intervals at a minimum.

The findings also indicate that schools' adapted their planning processes based on their initial experiences implementing the student survey. Secondary schools in the second *TTFM* student survey were even more successful in achieving student participation than for the first trial. However, to sustain interest and participation in the survey, schools should share the results of the survey and how these are being used with students as well as the rest of the school community.

A few other lessons for schools emerged, in particular the importance of explaining how individual students' privacy is being safe guarded and explaining about the nature of the survey beforehand, especially about the personal nature of some questions. Without these measures there is a risk that some students will not answer personal questions honestly or become distressed and students and schools will become disengaged from the survey.

The findings also indicate that there may be a case for reviewing and improving the language and terminology used in some survey questions.

5. Secondary schools use of data from the first trial

The *TTFM* survey is intended to provide timely information about student engagement and wellbeing that schools can use for their annual strategic planning. Secondary schools that completed the first *TTFM* trial in Term 3 2013 were asked about the ways that they used this information to implement new strategies in their schools, and whether the data initiated new conversations about student engagement and welfare. The chapter includes examples of how schools (Boxes 5.1 to 5.3) are using data drawn from the case studies, which are described in more detail in Appendix 2. The chapter answers the following evaluation questions:

- How have the results of the survey trial been used by schools over the past few months to identify areas for improvement?
- How did schools identify and implement appropriate and effective strategies to increase school engagement and effective teaching?
- What (if any) were the unintended consequences (positive or negative) of the student survey trial for schools?

5.1 Schools are implementing new strategies for student wellbeing, intellectual engagement and teaching strategies

Principals reported that based on the *TTFM* student survey data collected in 2013, new strategies are being implemented in their school for wellbeing (84%, n=100), intellectual engagement (80%, n=97), teaching strategies (74%, n=94), institutional engagement (63%, n=90), social engagement (60%, n=91) and post-school aspirations (37%, n=90). Only two principals commented that they had not found the data sufficiently informative to contribute to the development of new strategies.

Some schools have introduced new policies related to wellbeing, playground behaviour and bullying. Others have introduced school plan targets or updated faculty plans

Box 5.1 Listening to student voice to inform school planning

Secondary School C chose to participate in *TTFM* survey as a way of collecting data on student engagement and experiences, both at school and in the community. The school's data analysis has already identified some concerns for students' social and emotional wellbeing (especially in Year 9), as well as students' view that they lack an advocate at school who they can turn to for advice. Appreciating these issues in the data has bolstered the Creating Connections program, which commenced in 2013, as a student-led whole-school response to the felt lack of interaction between students across cohorts. The school intends to continue the Creating Connections program and develop new projects, which can be monitored as trends emerged in current and future *TTFM* survey data. In doing so, projects that align with strategic planning goals can be integrated with the priorities of the student welfare team and with students' voice at this secondary School.

based on the survey findings. A small number of schools have created a new staff role and/ or employed new staff to help implement new strategies in the school.

The following strategies have been implemented to increase student engagement and/ or effective teaching, based at least in part on the evidence from the first student survey.

Student engagement

> *Student voice is being driven in a range of ways through the student leadership group. Students led a staff discussion about what makes a good teacher and lesson. There is now follow up to occur based on this discussion. Students lead sessions on bullying with their peer groups (Metropolitan, low SES, medium)*

Student voice is being promoted within schools in the areas of student leadership, welfare programs and/ or teaching practices. Student wellbeing programs on managing stress and anxiety and about bullying have been bolstered or introduced (see Box 5.1). School counselling programs are also being promoted so that students are aware of the assistance available to them. Some schools have introduced or strengthened strategies that develop student skills and capacity, from gifted and talented programs to learning support. The *TTFM* student survey has also been used in some schools as an opportunity to engage students in data analysis (see Box 5.2) and so promote student leadership.

Schools have also strengthened support for subject selection and career planning/ post-school aspirations following the

Box 5.2 A student-led approach to analysing and reporting the results

At Secondary School C, data from the 2013 and 2014 survey is currently being analysed by a team of fourteen Year 12 school leaders (a mix of Student Representative Council representatives and school prefects) and about six teachers, overseen by a head teacher who liaises with the school executive. On the advice of the principal, this team of teachers includes a mix of staff from the welfare team and broader staffing body to ensure a diversity of views are brought to the table. In pairs, the student leaders have been given a couple of data items to explore and report on e.g. student outcomes, or depression and anxiety. They have used the *Tell Them From Me* website to manipulate data and explore issues by generating unique tables. By May 2014, student leaders had met on two occasions to report their findings. Comparing results at their school to NSW norms was especially interesting to students, as were findings around students' sense of belonging and motivation. While they were not surprised by most data—for example, levels of bullying in Year 9—they did find the drop in motivation to finish the HSC among Year 11 and Year 12 unexpected. They were unsure whether this data accurately reflects their experience at school. Overall, the student leaders have been highly engaged in the reporting and analysis process, which they view as a positive way to help the wider student body. The survey data has not been presented to all students and there are currently no plans to do so. However, the school does intend to explain how new activities or programs are connected to issues that students have raised in the survey.

Teachers and staff not directly involved in survey implementation or analysis have been briefed of the results at staff meetings. Because teachers don't know the questions, some consider that their capacity to interpret the results is limited. The survey coordinator has been working to strengthen the communication of survey to demonstrate their utility in school planning—this is seen as important to ensure ongoing commitment from all staff.

TTFM survey. Others have introduced more extra curricula activities for their students. In order to strengthen student motivation and engagement, schools have introduced or strengthened peer support and mentoring programs for students. Some have used focus groups to learn more about student views. Others are paying more attention to recognition of student effort and achievement through awards. Some schools have increased their focus on attendance issues. Others have developed strategies to engage Aboriginal young people.

> *[We have] employed a youth worker to help students who are feeling they do not have an advocate. [We have also] increased efforts to promote positive school culture. (Provincial, mid SES, medium size)*

Effective teaching

Schools have also introduced or strengthened strategies to increase the quality and effectiveness of teaching through professional development in a range of methods based on the student survey results for example, explicit teaching, instructional rounds, differentiation, personalised learning and project based learning. Some strategies include team teaching, peer coaching and classroom observations. One school has created professional learning teams to better target professional development.

> *The staff have trained in Focus on Reading and are using the "Super Six" strategies in all Year 7 and 8 classes' (Provincial, mid SES, medium size).*

5.2 The survey expanded the information available about students

Twelve percent of principals said that the survey results gave them new information about the students in their school. Most principals (85%) report that the student survey has expanded the information that they had about students. Only 3 per cent said that the results did not add to what they already knew about the school and students.

> *The school was already on a course of significant change as a result of research and longitudinal school based data. This data allowed us to compare with instruments that we were already using to plot our progress…Data from the second and hopefully subsequent surveys will enable meaningful and productive dialogue. (Metropolitan, low SES, medium size)*

5.2.1 New information about students

Where schools received new and additional information about students, this was about:

- Engagement and motivation (n=5)
- Student sense of belonging (n=3)

- Student satisfaction with school (n=2)
- Bullying (n=2)
- Post-school aspirations (n=1)
- General perceptions (n=1).

5.2.2 New conversations or changes in the school prompted by the survey

Almost all schools have started new conversations, enriched existing dialogues, and/or made changes in the school following the survey. The conversations are mostly between staff members, while a few also include parents. Most of the new conversations are within two broad groups: about student anxiety and wellbeing, and about professional learning and development for teachers. There are also many conversations about student engagement and participation, and to a lesser extent about student behaviour, bullying and building positive relationships within the school.

> *The first survey generated considerable conversation across the school community. The emphasis on the importance of engagement of students in their own education became much more important and complemented the conversations we were already having about teacher quality. (Provincial, mid SES, medium size)*

Box 5.3: Consolidating school activities and improving communication across the school

Secondary School B adopted the *TTFM* student survey following discussions between the principal and other leaders in a local cluster of secondary schools about how to offer better resources to students. The *TTFM* student survey was seen as a tool to understand students' needs so that activities, programs and professional development could be more effectively targeted. The principal also hoped that the survey could provide evidence to the school community about student engagement issues that she had observed but not yet been successful in opening dialogue about. A new school management cycle will commence in 2015. Accordingly, the school has already started conversations about how to use the survey data for strategic planning. Two key focus areas have been identified. The first is to improve channels of communication across the school community, not only between teachers and students, but also between teachers and the executive, and with parents. This need was identified in the *TTFM* survey data: teachers were surprised by the low levels of student connectedness to school, they felt that 'we do have a wonderful welfare program…do the students' not know?' Staff have since consolidated a list of all the clubs on offer, which is now advertised around the school grounds and in the newsletter. The school website is also being revamped. An improved communications strategy for assessment schedules, homework, and other information to parents, is under development. The second focus area has been to strengthen the sports offering at the school. The survey data has provided evidence to gain the support of the P&C to improve facilities, such as basketball and tennis courts and cricket fields. The school has also been forging relationships with an academic who researches PDHPE education to improve how sports are taught.

One principal has found that the survey has opened up conversations with staff about student engagement and possible new approaches that were previously difficult to sustain (see Box 5.3).

5.3   Only positive unintended consequences were reported

We asked principals at the case study schools about any unintended consequences, positive or negative, from conducting the student survey. They did not experience any negative consequences, but commented on some of the surprising or helpful feedback that they received from the survey and the opportunity it has provided for discussions with staff or parents about student engagement.

> *The survey made us realise how important it is that we communicate expectations about homework to parents. The survey also opened the way for more discussion with parents around their children, and this is great.*

> *The survey validated a lot of work that has been done in the school around the relational pedagogy with students – we didn't assume or predict this because it was our first time.*

5.4   Conclusions

The *TTFM* student survey has provided enough new and interesting information about student engagement at schools to open up fresh discussions and investigations about school practices and what can be done differently to improve students' experience of school and their outcomes. A wide range of strategies related to school policy on student wellbeing, student engagement (both social and intellectual) and effective teaching strategies have been introduced or refreshed and strengthened in schools following the first survey trial.

6. Primary school *TTFM* student survey

During the second trial of the *TTFM* student survey, 55 primary schools participated for the first time. This chapter describes the participating schools and students and looks at the experience of these primary schools in using the *TTFM* student survey. The chapter addresses six specific evaluation questions about these primary schools implementing the survey for the first time:

- What factors enable implementation?
- What factors challenge/ inhibit implementation?
- What were the costs to schools of implementation?
- How will the results be used by schools to identify areas for improvement?
- Would the school recommend that other school participate in the student survey?
- Would the school participate in another student survey?

6.1 Profile of participating primary schools

The 55 primary schools who participated in the *TTFM* student survey trial were located in metropolitan (56%), provincial (42%) and remote (2%) areas of NSW. Just over half the schools (58%) have low SES profiles (ICSEA <1,000). Three-quarters of the schools have more than 100 students (see Table 3).

6.2 Profile of participating students

Primary schools implementing the *TTFM* student survey achieved a high level of participation amongst their students. The *TTFM* student survey was completed by 6,701 primary students, which is 85 per cent of the total student population in Years 4, 5 and 6 at the participating schools. Three schools did not survey Year 4 students. Response rates for all students show that 84 per cent of participating schools attained a response rate of over 70 per cent (see Figure 2), and a median response rate of 89 per cent.

Figure 5.   Response rate for primary school students
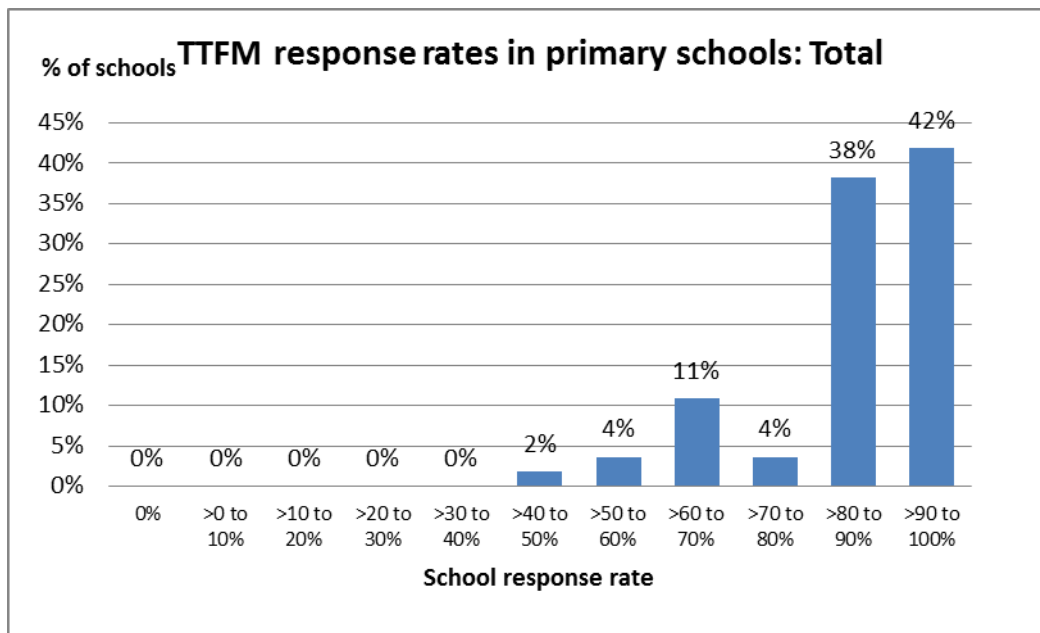
Source: CESE

6.3   Implementation

In this section we look at the factors that affected the implementation of the *TTFM* student survey trial in primary schools, particularly those that enabled the implementation and the main challenges faced by schools. An important contextual factor is the high level of student acceptance of the survey—almost all principals (89%) report that students were positive about doing the survey, with the remainder having a neutral attitude. We also report on the costs to schools, as indicated by the hours spent by team members on planning, implementation and analysis/ reporting.

6.3.1   Enablers for survey implementation

Cooperation of classroom teachers

Just under half of principals (41%) considered the cooperation of classroom teachers as the most helpful factor in implementing the survey successfully. The majority of principals (80%) report that teaching staff were positive about the student survey. Teachers were "somewhat negative" about the survey at only one school.

Having a dedicated survey team

One quarter of principals (26%) said that having a dedicated survey team was the most helpful factor in implementation of the survey.

The Learning Bar website

For 15% of principals, The Learning Bar website was the most helpful factor in implementing the survey at their school.

Other factors

Other factors which were found to be helpful were Department emails (12%) and the support of school-based administrative and technical staff (6%).

6.3.2   Implementation challenges

The majority of primary school respondents (60%) did not experience any major challenges to survey implementation. No schools received any formal complaints from either parents or students about the survey.

Managing school logistics

Five principals (14%) reported that managing school logistics was a challenge for their school. These schools were across all demographic categories.

Accessing webinars

Three schools (9%) experienced difficulties in accessing the training webinars from The Learning Bar. One of these schools also reported having difficulties managing the logistics of delivering the survey.

Allocating usernames and passwords

Three schools (9%) had challenges in allocating the student usernames and passwords to their students. Two of these schools also mentioned difficulties with the school logistics.

Other challenges

Other areas of significant challenge for schools in implementing the student survey were:

- in-school support (2 schools)
- teacher cooperation and staff resources for implementing the survey (1 school)
- parental support (1 school).

6.3.3   School resource commitment

Principals provided an estimate of the total cumulative hours for all staff members to implement the survey, including planning, administration of the survey and analysis/

reporting (see Table 6). Just over two-thirds of schools (69%) report that the survey was implemented with less than 20 hours of staff time. Nearly one-quarter of schools (23%) report that an investment of between 20 and 39 hours was needed. Higher hours were reported by the three large, low SES school, up to a total of between 80 and 99 hours.

Table 6.   Hours taken to implement the primary school survey

Hours	n	%
Less than 20 hours	24	69%
20 to 39 hours	8	23%
40 to 59 hours	1	3%
60 to 79 hours	1	3%
80 to 99 hours	1	3%
TOTAL	35	100%

6.4   Using The Learning Bar's reporting system

Webinar on reporting was helpful

All principals and school coordinators were encouraged to take part in one of several webinars and a recording of one of the webinars was also available. Just over two-thirds of principals participated in the webinar about reporting, and of these 71 per cent report that it provided them with all the information they needed to interpret and use their school's data. The remaining 29 per cent, all from large schools with over 100 students, said that it partially fulfilled this aim. Eight of the principals chose not to or were unable to do the training and three were unsuccessful in taking part in the webinar.

The interactive reporting system is easy to interpret

All of the principals who responded to the evaluation survey found The Learning Bar's interactive reporting system easy to interpret. They were evenly divided about whether this was "very easy" (51%) or "moderately easy" (49%).

6.5   Perceptions of value for primary schools: early views

At this early stage, most primary school respondents are optimistic that the data will be useful and assist schools to identify areas for improvement.

Principals expect new and valuable information from the survey

The main topics that principals report they expect the student survey to provide new or valuable information about are:

- Intellectual engagement (71%)
- Bullying (69%)
- Social engagement (66%)
- School engagement (66%)
- Classroom context (51%)
- Emotional health (49%)

New information that principals received from the survey

The majority of principals (86%) said that the *TTFM* student survey expanded on their existing knowledge of students, while 9 per cent (all from large schools) reported receiving new information about students. One principal of a large primary school with low SES was very pleased to find that expectations for further education were much higher than they predicted. This school was also pleased to find the teacher/student rapport and advocacy was very high. Another principal from a large primary school with high SES found that as students' engagement decreased as they progressed through to higher years in school.

A range of aspects of school life that principals hope to influence

The respondents identified many aspects of school life that the student survey data could be used to influence:

- greater voice for student concerns
- emotional health of students and staff attitude towards student emotional health
- student and teacher responses to bullying
- student mental health
- the way students perceive their teacher
- the ability of teachers to motivate and engage students
- students' engagement with school and their learning. Some had a special interest in boys' engagement or gifted and talented students. Some want to know more about reasons for disengagement
- expectations of student achievement
- quality teaching and teacher reflection on teaching and learning
- learning design and implementation, and
- welfare discipline, bullying programs.

6.6 How results will be used

At this stage, over half of the principals who responded to the evaluation survey are intending to use the student survey results for strategic planning processes (77%), to

improve school welfare systems (60%), planning initiatives to meet certain student groups' needs (60%) and to engage students (54%) (Table 7).

> *Whilst we did have an understanding of most of the areas, the data has proven invaluable to prioritise and pinpoint areas that need to be addressed and communicated. The data is a most valuable tool for change—principal, large provincial primary school*

Table 7.   Intended use of the student survey results in primary schools

Intended use	n	%
School strategic planning process	27	77%
Improving school welfare systems	21	60%
Planning initiatives to meet certain student groups' needs	21	60%
Engaging students	19	54%
Planning professional learning programs	15	43%
Engaging the community	15	43%
Monitoring the effects of new initiatives	8	23%
Improving internal collaborative processes	4	11%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

6.6.1   Intended audiences

The main intended audiences for the student survey results are teachers (97%) and the P&C (80%). Just over half (57%) of the principals intend to share the results with all parents. Less than half (43%) of the principals intend to share results with students. Fewer principals reported an intention to share the results with other groups such as prospective students and families (14%), other schools within a school cluster (14%), community partners (6%) and the School Board (3%).

6.7   Conclusions

The *TTFM* student survey was successfully implemented in primary schools, with few challenges arising. Principals are positive about the data collected and at this early stage able to identify areas where the information will inform their planning and school improvement initiatives.

7.   Future implementation of *TTFM*

This chapter looks at whether secondary and primary schools are likely to participate in another student survey and what is the most appropriate timing of *TTFM* surveys. It also looks at whether principals are interested in similar surveys for staff or parents.

For primary principals we address the question of whether they would recommend the survey to other schools. This question was addressed for secondary principals in the first evaluation report.

7.1   Lessons

Term 3 and Term 1 are considered the best times for student surveys

Most principals who responded to the surveys were interested in continuing to use the student survey at their school, with the most popular approach being conducting the survey once per year (58% secondary, 49% primary).

The most favoured time of year for a student survey is Term 3 (37% for both secondary and primary schools), followed by Term 1 (30% secondary, 29% primary) and Term 2 (22% secondary, 23% primary). Provincial primary schools preferred Term 1, while metropolitan primary schools preferred Term 3.

Primary school target group

Most primary principals (71%) thought that the survey was suitable for Years 4 to 6. Just under one-third (29%) said that it is suitable for Years 5 and 6 only.

Greatly reduced interest in conducting a survey if the primary school needs to pay for it

If schools needed to pay ⬚ to conduct the *TTFM* student survey, only 18 per cent say they are very likely to continue and 21 per cent are somewhat likely to continue to survey students. Just under half (44%) said they are not very likely to survey students if there is a cost component. Of these, small schools especially indicated would not continue to participate.

Primary principals would recommend the survey to other schools

Half (49%) of principals who responded said that they thought all schools should participate in the *TTFM* school survey. Almost a quarter (23%) said they would recommend the survey for different types of schools. Just under one-fifth (17%) said that they would recommend the use of a student engagement survey but not necessarily this one.

High schools want to add questions of interest to the surveys

Almost all (95%) secondary principals are interested in adding some questions to the student survey. Topics of interest were reported in the first evaluation report. These are:

- the types of learning that students find engaging
- reasons for disengagement
- more information on truancy
- long-term goals and ambitions
- which subject areas need the most improvement.

Most primary principals did not want to add other topics to the survey. Only one principal suggested that a deeper exploration of positive relationships with teachers, say around trust, could be included in future surveys. The only other comment received on this matter said that the range of topics presented was already enough for students to reflect on.

High level of interest in similar surveys for teachers or parents

There was high interest (98% secondary, 97% primary) in having a similar survey for teachers and for parents (97% secondary, 88% primary). One secondary school has already surveyed their staff using similar survey questions:

> *We also asked similar survey questions of our staff. This was an interesting exercise as there was a degree of agreement between student and staff responses as well as difference. These conversations were certainly used to inform the update of the school improvement plan. (Metropolitan, high SES, large size)*

Suggestions for improvement from primary schools

Only a few primary school respondents suggested improvements:

- Some of the questions such as "Is your class a gifted and talented class"[2] should be answered by the school to avoid confusion.
- Some of the terms used reflect the Canadian context and should be changed to reflect local contexts and be less confusing for students, for example, belonging to school clubs, which is confusing for students.
- Answers to questions such as the bullying question needs to be interpreted in the social context of the school where the students are enrolled. For example, what one student at one school may define as serious bullying in another school may not even be viewed as bullying
- The language used in the questions needs to be simpler so that all students can understand the questions.

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[2] This was a DEC custom question that had not been trialled previously: "Are you in an Opportunity Class or other gifted and talented class?"

7.2   Conclusions

Both secondary and primary schools are interested in continuing to conduct *TTFM* student survey at their schools. However, the results indicate that a future possible cost of [   ] is likely to be a barrier to primary schools implementing the student survey. The most favoured timing for *TTFM* surveys is to be Term 3, although the 2013 experience showed that this can impact the involvement of senior students who are taking or preparing for exams. Term 1 was also considered a suitable time for *TTFM*. Secondary principals would like to add topics of interest to future surveys, but primary principals are not interested in this option. Both secondary and primary principals are interested in similar surveys for teachers and for parents.

Appendix 1: Phase 2 survey responses

Secondary school principals

Q1. Did you participate in the survey?

Response	n	%
No	41	40%
Yes	62	60%
TOTAL	103	100%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Secondary School Principals, 2014

For those who did not participate in the second student survey

Q2. Why did you decide not to participate? [Open]

For those who did participate in the second student survey

Q3. What are the total cumulative hours for all staff in implementing the second student survey?

Response	n	%
Less than 20 hours	19	31%
20 to 39 hours	18	30%
40 to 59 hours	17	28%
60 to 79 hours	4	7%
80 to 99 hours	2	3%
100 or more hours	1	2%
TOTAL	61	100%
Not applicable	1	

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Secondary School Principals, 2014

Q4. How would you describe the attitude of the teaching staff in relation to the second student survey?

Response	n	%
Very positive	19	31%
Somewhat positive	30	49%
Neutral	11	18%
Somewhat negative	1	2%
Very negative	0	0%
TOTAL	61	100%
Not applicable	1	

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Secondary School Principals, 2014

Q5. How would you describe the attitude of the students in relation to the second student survey?

Response	n	%
Very positive	8	13%
Somewhat positive	36	59%
Neutral	12	20%
Somewhat negative	4	7%
Very negative	1	2%
TOTAL	61	100%
Not applicable	1	

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Secondary School Principals, 2014

For all respondents

Q6. Thinking about the results of the first student survey, please rank how important the following measures were for you (n=103)

Response	1 (Most Important)	2	3	4	5	6 (Least important)	TOTAL	No data
Intellectual engagement	40%	26%	9%	14%	11%	0%	100%	8
Institutional engagement	9%	17%	13%	17%	18%	27%	100%	13
Social engagement	12%	16%	23%	22%	17%	11%	100%	8
Wellbeing	38%	17%	23%	14%	7%	1%	100%	8
Teaching strategies	3%	20%	28%	20%	18%	11%	100%	7
Post school aspirations	2%	8%	3%	15%	27%	44%	100%	15

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Secondary School Principals, 2014

Q7. Please indicate whether you have implemented new strategies to improve the following areas, based on the results of the first student survey (n=103)

Response	Yes		TOTAL		No data
	n	per cent	n	per cent	n
Intellectual engagement	78	80%	97	100%	6
Institutional engagement	57	63%	90	100%	13
Social engagement	55	60%	91	100%	12
Wellbeing	84	84%	100	100%	3
Teaching strategies	70	74%	94	100%	9
Post school aspirations	33	37%	90	100%	13

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Secondary School Principals, 2014

Q8. Name up to three strategies you have implemented to increase student engagement and/ or effective teaching, based (at least in part) on evidence from the first student survey. [Open]

Q9. After sharing the results of the first survey, what new conversations or changes in the school were prompted by the student survey? [Open]

Q10. Overall, were the results mostly:

Response	n	per cent
New information for you about students	12	12%
Expanded on your existing knowledge of students	85	85%
Did not add to your knowledge of students or school	3	3%
TOTAL	100	100%
Don't Know/ Not Applicable	3	
No data	2	

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Secondary School Principals, 2014

Q11. [Open question] What new and additional information did you get?

Q12. How often would you like the survey to be conducted?

Response	n	per cent
Once per year	58	58%
Twice per year	7	7%
Every two years	35	35%
Not at all	0	0%
TOTAL	100	100%
Don't know/ Not applicable	1	
No data	2	

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Secondary School Principals, 2014

Q13. What time/s of the year is ideal to complete the survey?

Response	n	per cent
Term one	30	29.7%
Term two	22	21.8%
Term three	38	37.6%
Term four	6	5.9%
No ideal time	5	5.0%
TOTAL	101	100%
No data	2	

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Secondary School Principals, 2014

Q14. I would be interested in a teacher survey covering similar topics.

Response	n	per cent
Strongly agree	59	63%
Agree	33	35%
Disagree	2	2%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
TOTAL	94	100%
Don't know/ Not Applicable	5	
No data	4	

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Secondary School Principals, 2014

Q15. I would be interested in a parent survey covering similar topics.

Response	n	per cent
Strongly agree	57	63%
Agree	31	34%
Disagree	2	2%
Strongly disagree	1	1%
TOTAL	91	100%
Don't know/ Not Applicable	9	
No data	3	

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Secondary School Principals, 2014

Q16. I would be interested in being able to add some additional questions relevant to my school's circumstances.

Response	n	per cent
Strongly agree	45	49%
Agree	41	45%
Disagree	5	5%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
TOTAL	91	100%
Don't Know/ Not Applicable	9	
No data	3	

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Secondary School Principals, 2014

Primary school principals

Q1. When did you commence as principal or relieving principal in your current school?

Year	n	per cent
1989	1	3%
1995	1	3%
2003	1	3%
2006	2	6%
2007	4	11%
2008	1	3%
2009	3	9%
2011	6	17%
2012	4	11%
2013	8	23%
2014	4	11%
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q2. Did the school experience any significant challenges in the following areas when completing the student survey?

Significant challenges (n=35)	n	%
Managing school logistics	5	14%
Accessing the webinars	3	9%
Username and passwords	3	9%
In-school support	2	6%
Staff resources	1	3%
Teacher cooperation	1	3%
Parental support	1	3%
Availability of computers	0	0%
Technical issues	0	0%
Student cooperation	0	0%
External support	0	0%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q3. If you had to choose one factor that was most helpful in implementing the survey, what would it be?

Response	n	per cent
The cooperation of classroom teachers	14	41%
Having a dedicated survey team	9	26%
The Learning Bar Website	5	15%
Department emails	4	12%
The support of school-based administrative and technical staff	2	6%
TOTAL	34	100%
No data	1	

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q4. What are the total cumulative hours for all staff in implementing the second student survey?

Response	n	per cent
Less than 20 hours	24	69%
20 to 39 hours	8	23%
40 to 59 hours	1	3%
60 to 79 hours	1	3%
80 to 99 hours	1	3%
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q5. Broadly speaking how would you describe the attitude of the teaching staff in relation to the student survey?

Response	n	per cent
Very positive	14	40%
Somewhat positive	14	40%
Neutral	6	17%
Somewhat negative	1	3%
Very negative	0	0%
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q6. How would you describe the attitude of the students in relation to the survey?

Response	n	per cent
Very positive	16	46%
Somewhat positive	15	43%
Neutral	4	11%
Somewhat negative	0	0%
Very negative	0	0%
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q7. Have you received the webinar about reporting? If so, did it provide you with all the information you needed to interpret and use your school's data?

Response	n	per cent
Fully	17	71%
Partially	7	29%
Not really	0	0%
Not at all	0	0%
TOTAL	24	100%
N/A: Chose not to/ was unable to do training	8	
N/A: Unsuccessful in taking part in the webinar	3	

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q8. How easy was it to interpret the information you extracted from The Learning Bar's interactive report system?

Response	n	per cent
Very easy	18	51%
Moderately easy	17	49%
Not very easy	0	0%
Not at all easy	0	0%
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q9. At this stage, in what ways are you intending to use the student survey results (n=35)?

Response	n	per cent
School strategic planning process	27	77%
Improving school welfare systems	21	60%
Planning initiatives to meet certain student groups' needs	21	60%
Engaging students	19	54%
Planning professional learning programs	15	43%
Engaging the community	15	43%
Monitoring the effects of new initiatives	8	23%
Improving internal collaborative processes	4	11%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q10. Do you expect the survey to provide new and valuable information about (n=35)?

Topics	n	per cent
Intellectual engagement	25	71%
Bullying	24	69%
Social engagement	23	66%
School engagement	23	66%
Classroom context	18	51%
Emotional health	17	49%
Quality instruction	15	43%
Teaching strategies	13	37%
Family context	4	11%
Physical activity	4	11%
Academic outcomes - Maths	2	6%
Academic outcomes - English	1	3%
Academic outcomes - Science	0	0%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q13. Who have you, or are you intending to, share the results with (n=35)?

Response	n	per cent
Teachers	34	97%
P&C	28	80%
All parents	20	57%
Students	15	43%
Prospective students and families	5	14%
Other schools (cluster)	5	14%
Community partners	2	6%
School Board	1	3%
Human service agencies	0	0%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q14. Overall, were the results mostly:

Response	n	per cent
New information for you about students	3	9%
Expanded on your existing knowledge of students	30	86%
Did not add to your knowledge of students or school	2	6%
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q16. How often would you like the survey to be conducted?

Response	n	per cent
Once per year	17	49%
Twice per year	8	23%
Every two years	9	26%
Not at all	1	3%
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q17. What time/s of the year is ideal to complete the survey?

Response	n	per cent
Term one	10	29%
Term two	8	23%
Term three	13	37%
Term four	2	6%
No ideal time	2	6%
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q18. I would be interested in a teacher survey covering similar topics?

Response	n	per cent
Strongly agree	20	57%
Agree	14	40%
Disagree	1	3%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q19. I would be interested in a parent survey covering similar topics?

Response	n	per cent
Strongly agree	14	41%
Agree	16	47%
Disagree	3	9%
Strongly disagree	1	3%
TOTAL	34	100%
Don't Know/ Not Applicable	1	

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q20. Is the student suitable for participants in Years 4, 5 and 6?

Response	n	per cent
Suitable for Years 4, 5 and 6	25	71%
Suitable for Years 5 and 6 only	10	29%
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q22. How likely is the school to continue with the student survey, if the cost to the school was around ☐ per year?

Response	n	per cent
Very likely	6	17%
Somewhat likely	7	20%
Not very likely	15	43%
Not at all likely	6	17%
Unsure	1	3%
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Q23. Would you recommend that other schools participate in the Tell Them From Me student survey?

Response	n	per cent
All schools should participate	17	49%
Would recommend for schools like mine	3	9%
Would recommend for different types of schools	8	23%
Would not recommend for any schools	1	3%
Would recommend the use of a student engagement survey but not necessarily this one	6	17%
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: *TTFM* Second Survey, Primary School Principals, 2014

Appendix 2: Case studies

1. Strengthening the school's new approach to student wellbeing

The *TTFM* student survey was delivered at High School A in August–September 2013 (Term 3). It was open to all students from Year 7 to Year 12 and 152 students participate in it. The school participated in the survey again in 2014.

The school took up the *TTFM* student survey because it was seen as a timely opportunity to collect data to inform and monitor its new focus on student wellbeing. This focus was introduced by the principal in 2013 according to the need for a structured whole-school approach to student wellbeing. The principal is pleased that the survey brings evidence to her observations about student wellbeing: evidence that she can now share with students, teachers and parents.

The head teacher for student wellbeing, who coordinated the implementation of the survey, explained how survey data is already being used to respond to identified student needs. Year advisors on the wellbeing team draw on the data regularly to structure wellbeing lesson plans around the specific needs of different cohorts. Some issues felt across the school, such as high anxiety, have also been proactively targeted with resources from MindMatters and BeyondBlue and by investing in teachers' professional development in positive psychology. The whole school now shares responsibility for the wellbeing of all students.

As part of significant reforms at High School A, the school executive is looking for new ways to work with the local community. The availability of survey data to set these strategic directions is critical. The principal views the data as a tool to leverage the support of government agencies and non-government service providers for initiatives that benefit students. This is pertinent for some issues in the community—such as mental health and suicide—that can be challenging to progress action on without a recognised evidence base.

The school is looking forward to getting results from its second round of the *TTFM* survey. Teachers and the school executive plan to use this data to refine their focus on student wellbeing: ensuring that it is strategically embedded in school planning and responsive to local community issues.

2. Consolidating school activities and improving communication across the school

High School B delivered the *TTFM* student survey to students in 2013 and 2014. In both years, the survey was open to all students in the Year 7, Year 9 and Year 11 cohorts. About 190 students participated in the survey on each occasion.

The *TTFM* student survey was adopted at the school following discussions between the principal and other leaders in a local cluster of secondary schools about how to offer better resources to students. The survey was seen as a tool to understand students' needs so that activities, programs and professional development could be more effectively targeted. The principal also hoped that the survey could provide evidence to inform the school community about student engagement issues that she had observed but not yet been successful in opening dialogue about.

A new school management cycle will commence at High School B in 2015. Accordingly, the school has already started conversations about how to use the survey data for strategic planning. Two key focus areas have been identified. The first is to improve channels of communication across the school community, not only between teachers and students, but also between teachers and the executive, and with parents. This need was identified in the survey data: teachers were surprised by the low levels of student connectedness to school, they felt that 'we do have a wonderful welfare program…do the students' not know?' Staff have since consolidated a list of all the clubs on offer, which is now advertised around the school grounds and in the newsletter. The school website is also being revamped. An improved communications strategy for assessment schedules, homework, and other information to parents, is under development. The second focus area has been to strengthen the sports offering at the school. The survey data has provided evidence to gain the support of the P&C to improve facilities, such as basketball and tennis courts and cricket fields. The school has also been forging relationships with an academic who researches PDHPE education to improve how sports are taught.

The principal will look at ways to continue offering the *TTFM* student survey as it is provides evidence to inform conversations and improve resources across the school community. In particular, data from Year 7 will be explored to see how students are settling into high school and data from Year 9 will be studied so that students can be appropriately supported as they transition into their senior years.

3. Listening to student voice to inform school planning

The *TTFM* student survey was delivered at High School C in 2013 and 2014. In 2013, the survey was open to students from Year 7 to Year 11 and 746 completed it—the survey was not delivered to the Year 12 cohort in Term 3 that year as students were busy preparing for the Higher School Certificate. In 2014, all students from Year 7 to Year 12 had the opportunity to do the survey and 823 students completed it.

The school chose to participate in the trial of the *TTFM* student survey because it was seen as a way to collect data on student engagement and experiences, both at school and in the community. The principal identified the strategic purposes of this data collection: to inform school planning and to better tailor activities to students. The survey is described as a 'way of getting to know the students better so that we can respond to their needs.'

The deputy principal added that the survey is a way to hear and respond to student voice. As the school enters a new school management planning cycle in 2015, the survey adds to their existing data pool. *TTFM* student survey data is also expected to provide a mechanism to leverage support for programs e.g. if teachers identify a need for an anti-bullying program, the survey provides evidence that can be presented to the P&C to secure funding. Currently, data from the survey is being analysed by a team of Year 12 school leaders and teachers, who liaise with the school executive. This analysis has already identified some concerns for students' social and emotional wellbeing (especially in Year 9), as well as students' view that they lack an advocate at school who they can turn to for advice. Appreciating these issues in the data has bolstered the Creating Connections program, which commenced in 2013, as a student-led whole-school response to the felt lack of interaction between students across cohorts.

The school intends to continue the Creating Connections program and develop new projects, which can be monitored as trends emerged in current and future *TTFM* student survey data. In doing so, projects that align with strategic planning goals can be integrated with the priorities of the student welfare team and with students' voice at this High School.

4. Understanding trend data to inform decision making

High School D implemented the *TTFM* student survey across the whole school in Term 3 2013 and Term1 2014. The first time, 756 students participated in the survey—only seven Year 12 students sat it due to exam pressures—but this increase to 893 students the following year as participation in the senior cohorts increased.

The principal's decision to participate in the *TTFM* student survey was informed by the school's involvement in the National Partnership project. The principal explained that High School D was invited to do the survey as part of this work—although she may have trialled it anyway because of its usefulness was a way to collect baseline data for the new school plan.

The school's use of the survey results has been measured with a focus on carefully interpreting data to understand how it can be integrated into school planning. The principal emphasises the importance of establishing a baseline of two or three years of data before responding with significant changes in the school or introducing new programs. This way, the data can be meaningfully used in the future, for example, to measure program effect or as part of an outcomes-based accountability framework.

Interest in the results has sparked conversations among teachers about the importance of existing programs for students and the potential for new ones. It has raised student wellbeing to the attention of the wider staffing body, beyond the student welfare unit. For example, the survey drew attention to student engagement in Year 9, which reminded staff that this cohort missed a wellbeing workshop, 'Being Unique Day', the previous year. This is now being followed up.

To bring student voice to the discussion around results, focus groups were also set up in 2014. There are six focus groups, each consisting of the year coordinator, two senior leaders, and some students from that cohort. These groups have already met twice to discuss the results, and will be reporting back to year assemblies. In the future, these focus groups will be used to reflect on strategic directions for the school by identifying what data could be used to measure program outcomes.

5. Benchmarking strategic directions at the school

High School E participated in the *TTFM* student survey in Term 3 2013 and Term 1 2014. In both years, the survey was open to all students from Year 7 to Year 12 and just over 600 students took part each time.

The school executive chose to participate in the *TTFM* student survey to get good quality data about students' perceptions of school and student engagement. The principal and other staff felt that students were quite happy at school but that this wasn't matched with equally high levels of engagement with learning. The survey was seen as a way to interrogate these gut feelings. The school is also trialling a new school planning tool as part of the National Partnership project. The survey has been identified as a way to get benchmark data that can add student voice to inform its strategic directions. It has been particularly useful for two of the school's three strategic directions.

Benchmark data for the first strategic direction—student engagement in school life is reflective, resilient and future focused—has been drawn from survey questions about students' sense of belonging, positive behaviour, and willingness to succeed at school. Targets have also been set, for example, to increase the percentage of students who report a sense of belonging to school to 75%. Survey data around whether students find learning interesting has been used as a benchmark for the second strategic direction— that student learning is dynamic, personalised and connected in a purposeful way.

To drive these strategic directions, teams of teachers have been set up with responsibilities under each. These teams have used the data to plan lessons in weekly seminars where students discuss wellbeing, careers and personalised learning. The framework for assessing student engagement that is presented in the *TTFM* student survey findings report has also been adopted for the school's planning. For example, the headings 'social engagement', 'institutional engagement' and 'intellectual engagement'

in the framework are now employed to structure how the school assesses its progress towards boosting student engagement.

6. A student-led approach to analysing and reporting the results

At High School C, data from the 2013 and 2014 survey is currently being analysed by a team of fourteen Year 12 school leaders (a mix of Student Representative Council representatives and school prefects) and about six teachers, overseen by a head teacher who liaises with the school executive. On the advice of the principal, this team of teachers includes a mix of staff from the welfare team and broader staffing body to ensure a diversity of views are brought to the table.

In pairs, the student leaders have been given a couple of data items to explore and report on e.g. student outcomes, or depression and anxiety. They have used the *TTFM* website to manipulate data and explore issues by generating unique tables. By May 2014, student leaders had met on two occasions to report their findings. Comparing results at their school to NSW norms and was especially interesting to students, as were findings around students' sense of belonging and motivation. While they were not surprised by most data—for example, levels of bullying in Year 9—they did find the drop in motivation to finish the HSC among Year 11 and Year 12 unexpected. They were unsure whether this data accurately reflects their experience at school.

Overall, the student leaders have been highly engaged in the reporting and analysis process, which they view as a positive way to help the wider student body. The survey data has not been presented to all students and there are no currently plans to do so. However, the school does intend to results explaining how new activities or programs are connected to issues that students have raised in the survey.

Teachers and staff not directly involved in survey implementation or analysis have been briefed of the results at staff meetings. Because teachers don't know the questions, some consider that their capacity to interpret the results is limited. The survey coordinator has been working to strengthen the communication of survey to demonstrate their utility in school planning—this is seen as important to ensure ongoing commitment from all staff.

There are plans to share the data with the P&C once the analysis is complete. As parents are also engaged on social media, it was been suggested that this might be a platform to communicate some data.

7. Students' experiences

School B

Senior students consider that the survey was answered honestly among their peers but a couple of students felt the personal questions could have been worded with more tact.

More concerns about answering the survey honestly were voiced among junior students. In part, this arose from a misunderstanding about the privacy of the data. Once students realised that individual passwords were connected to unique logins, rumours started about teachers being able to look at their particular responses. Despite this confusion, many junior students thought that the survey was good, asked worthwhile questions, and they were glad to give feedback. Some students would have liked more questions around their career paths, or be able to answer questions about how what they would do different scenarios (as a less abstract way of testing their sense of belonging, for example). Others would have liked to explain their answered in text.

It was common for students of all ages to express interest in the results. They were curious to know what their peers think about school and whether their personal experiences are widespread. A year meeting is generally seen as an appropriate forum to discuss the results.

Student would also be happy to do the survey again, up to twice a year if this was helpful for the school. One student explained that he found the survey was a good opportunity to reflect on his own study behaviours, routines at home and use of technology, 'it made me realise where my time goes.' However, students said they would be more engaged with the survey, and would do it more conscientiously, if they felt certain that the results were being used for change. A comment made by one student, which many students agreed, was that, 'It was kind of a shout to the wind, if we don't know the results or where they went.'

School D

Students generally reported neutral feelings towards doing the survey—'it was alright' or 'it was average'—but it was also common for students to say that they were more interested in the 2014 survey once teachers explained how the results would be used.

Both junior (Year 7–Year 9) and senior (Year 10–Year 12) students said the survey took about 20 minutes, 'a good amount of time.' Junior students are often unsure about whether they were told what the survey would be about or used for, but some remember that teachers reminded them to answer it honestly. Some senior students said they recall being told that the school may implement changes based on the results. A couple of students said they thought the survey was compulsory.

Most junior students who were asked said the survey was quite easy: that there weren't many question they didn't understand. By contrast, teachers tend to report that many students did ask for help. Senior students felt that the survey was clear and straightforward. They felt most questions were ok but, 'a couple were "a bit different", especially the emotional ones.' About half the senior students who were asked said that these personal questions were unexpected for an in-school survey: this did not bother some students but others said they wish they were more prepared. These students

explained that people may answer personal questions more honestly if they were given some warning to expect them.

Students reported that the scales and response options on some questions were limiting. For example, that the question about frequency of truancy did not let them give an accurate response. Students also said that questions about their perceptions of teachers were difficult to answer because they have lots of different teachers. Finally, a couple of students said that they would have liked more questions about their aspirations and goals. This way, if a common interest was found, the school could support students work towards this.

The students who have discussed the results in their year assembly, with the leadership of the focus group, have found this interesting. Teachers report that the students were so engaged that they gave themselves a round of applause when scoring better than the NSW norms. Other years are looking forward to looking at the data too. It was generally agreed that sharing the results in this way would mean students would be happier to do the survey every year. As one student said, 'If it benefits the school, it's not really a hassle'.