




Gathering Feedback and Input from Families A Summary of Tools

There are several methods that can be utilized by districts and schools as they strive gather feedback and input from families. Using multiple approaches often results in a better review. Refer to the chart below for a summary of three different evaluation methods.

Evaluation Tool	Focus Group 	Surveys 	Open Discussion Forum 
Target Audience	All Families	All Families	All Families
Description	Focus groups are small groups of 6-12 parents or family members utilized to gather qualitative data to better understand families' perspectives.	Surveys are a commonly used method for collecting parent and family feedback in an anonymous format.	Open discussion forums are similar to town hall meetings, allowing large groups of families the opportunity to provide feedback.
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe and hear parent/family thoughts and opinions firsthand. • An open and safe environment that encourages parents and family members to engage in discussion. • People are often willing to talk longer face-to-face versus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows parents and family members to respond at their leisure with a specified return date. • Commonly viewed as less intrusive and more private than other evaluation methods. • An effective way to give all families an opportunity to be part 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe and hear parent/family thoughts and opinions firsthand. • Allows for a large audience or group of parents and family members to participate. • Can be a cost-effective method to gain massive input when striving to evaluate the

	<p>filling out a form or talking on the phone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs can be contained if internal resources are used. 	<p>of the evaluation process in a short amount of time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive more accurate answers to sensitive questions because it's confidential. 	<p>school's compact in a short amount of time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple meetings can be held to accommodate various schedules.
<p>Disadvantages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limits the number of opinions at one time that could come from having a larger or wider audience. • Group conversation may be dominated by only a few parents, which would result in only their opinions being heard. • The facilitator needs to find a centralized location to have the meetings, send out notices about the focus group, and make arrangements for families without transportation to attend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all parents may be able to participate due to low literacy levels. • Requires persistence with follow-up and tracking to ensure a high response rate. • Some surveys require parents to have access to a computer to participate. • Mailing surveys can get expensive with the costs associated with postage, labels, copies and envelopes. • No face to face interaction to gauge the conversation and determine sincerity. • May be challenging to develop a high quality survey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding a centralized location to host a meeting outside of the school if the audience is anticipated to be too large for school facilities. • A skilled facilitator must lead the forum and allow enough time for a majority of parents and family members to comment. • It could be hard to regain control of the group if it is lost. • The cost of transportation and childcare can cause this cost-effective meeting to become expensive if it's held multiple times.