



Using the TELL Survey to Accelerate Student Learning



USING THE TELL SURVEY TO ACCELERATE STUDENT LEARNING

Across the country, an increasing number of states are redesigning their effectiveness systems and implementing growth measures to gauge teacher and leader effectiveness. Data from multiple sources, including survey data, can help provide feedback to leaders and teachers.

The purpose of this tool is to crosswalk a subset of the TELL survey questions with the BFK•Connect® teacher and leader effectiveness framework. The TELL questions included in this document are those that are strongly related to five important strategies for creating a high-growth school. The information in this document allows you to focus your attention on key areas of strength and opportunities for growth that impact student learning.

BACKGROUND

Five Strategies for Creating a High-Growth School

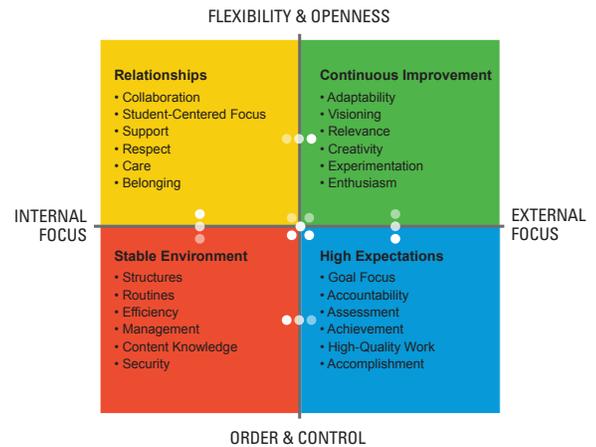
Over the past decade, Battelle for Kids has led *SOAR*, one of the largest school improvement collaboratives in the United States. Through *SOAR*, Battelle for Kids has conducted research to better understand how some schools and districts are able to produce higher than expected student growth. Five high-leverage strategies emerged from interviews with central office staff, principals, and teachers from many of the highest-growth districts and schools in Ohio.

BFK•Connect® Framework

Since the spring of 2008 researchers at Battelle for Kids have studied the practice of highly effective teachers—teachers who consistently produce high value-added scores with their students. We also have engaged in research with principals of highly effective schools. The BFK•Connect® Framework is one of the major products of this research. The framework captures four diverse dimensions or perspectives that ground the practice of highly effective educators:

- **Relationships**—Cultivating a supportive community
- **Continuous Improvement**—Adapting and embracing change
- **High Expectations**—Maximizing every student’s achievement
- **Stable Environment**—Creating structures and processes

The capacity to enact and integrate these dimensions is associated with high levels of performance. We call this type of integration *Powerful Practice* because of the jump in effectiveness that occurs when all four dimensions are fully integrated. The BFK•Connect® Framework is a tool that supports deeper reflection and action around the practices of teaching, leading, and learning.



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1. Limit goals and/or initiatives to focus on student learning.

Buildings and districts with a narrow focus, fewer initiatives, and a strong emphasis on student learning produce far greater gains in student growth than those districts that mistakenly allocate valuable resources, including time and money, over too many initiatives. Doug Reeves (2011) calls this phenomenon “initiative fatigue,” and reiterates the importance of a clear and limited focus to school improvement (p.14). “Good to Great” organizations do not start with “to do” lists, but have the discipline to stop doing too many things (Collins, 2001), and the same idea carries over to school districts. In fact, high-performing schools often do audits and create “not to do” lists, temporarily abandoning or suspending initiatives that are not directly related to student learning or where there is little evidence of such a link. Additionally, buildings that more thoroughly implement key initiatives at all levels produce greater student learning gains.

Programs each school district chooses to highlight can vary, depending on the needs of its students, but these goals must be consistently and thoroughly communicated at all levels. High performing schools usually have student learning as their number one goal. Many top performing districts do not waste time or energy worrying about mandates or chasing initiatives. Many have a simple formula for success: ensure a systemic approach to examining student learning data and responding accordingly. These schools align all of their resources and professional development to focus on their few initiatives. These schools revisit their goals and commonly and reassess through multiple lens (parents, students and staff) to ensure their practices align with their vision and goals.



TELL Survey Question	% Agree	
	Your School	State
Q2.1 c. Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions.		
Q2.1 e. Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do.		
Q2.1 g. Teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students.		
Q3.1 g. The physical environment of classrooms in this school supports teaching and learning.		
Q7.1 a. The faculty and leadership have a shared vision.		
Q7.1 e. Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.		
Q7.3 h. The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about instructional practices and support		
Q7.4 c. The school council makes decisions that positively impact instruction (i.e. curriculum, instructional practices, etc.).		
Q8.1 d. Professional learning opportunities are aligned with the school's improvement plan.		
Q8.1 m. Professional development enhances teachers' abilities to improve student learning.		
Q9.1 h. Teachers are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students.		



2. Establish important structures and routines.

Nearly every high-growth school has implemented structures, procedures, and routines that lead to purposeful collaboration for examining and responding to data, sharing professional practice, providing additional learning opportunities for students and teachers, and developing leaders system-wide.

For some schools, these new routines involve redesigning the school day to reallocate resources toward achieving specific goals. When Odden and Archibald (2009) studied districts and schools that had actually doubled student performance data, the researchers discovered that these schools used time and resources differently than other schools. Many increased their reading and math instructional time, used flexible grouping for smaller groups, reduced class sizes in grades K–3, found extra time for struggling students during and after school, and adopted professional learning community (PLC) concepts. Districts accomplished this despite limited resources. The highest-performing districts and schools believe in identifying times, structures, and outcomes for collaboration. Some of these districts discuss the importance of developing team-building skills, such as collaborative norms, communication, and goal setting. Nearly every district emphasizes purposeful collaboration by creating structures or routines that ensure collaboration time is spent examining student work or sharing instructional or assessment practices.

Some specific examples of structures or routines include:

- No new instruction periods for re-teaching;
- Response to intervention (RTI) model, implemented with fidelity, with focus on helping struggling students and stretching students who master material;
- Enrichment periods for stretching students who mastered material;
- Collaboration periods for teachers to share practice and examine student work;
- System to monitor struggling students;
- Student data folders;
- Increased instructional time for reading and math;
- Collaboration time for teachers to review and analyze data; and
- Summer academies/workshops for teachers for additional professional development.

Districts with remarkable growth implement RTI models with fidelity and focus energies on growing proficient students with enrichment and stretch activities. Districts with RTI models and little growth usually make intervention the responsibility of someone else, and the models are not implemented the way they are designed to be. Many high-growth schools use weekly collaboration time in addition to individual planning time for teachers to share instructional strategies, review assessments, and monitor student learning.



TELL Survey Question		% Agree	
		Your School	State
02.1	a. Class sizes are reasonable such that teachers have the time available to meet the needs of all students.		
02.1	b. Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.		
02.1	d. The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.		
02.1	f. Teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.		
07.3	b. The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about facilities and resources		
07.3	c. The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about the use of time in my school		
07.4	d. The school council makes decisions that positively impact school staffing and schedules.		
08.1	b. An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development.		
08.1	h. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice.		
08.1	j. Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.		
08.1	l. Professional development enhances teachers' ability to implement instructional strategies that meet diverse student learning needs.		
09.1	e. Teachers work in professional learning communities to develop and align instructional practices.		
09.1	f. Provided supports (i.e. instructional coaching, professional learning communities, etc.) translate to improvements in instructional practices by teachers.		



3. Develop a balanced assessment approach.

Nearly every high-growth school has their teachers focusing on formative instructional practices as well as developing and using short-cycle/common assessments. Frequent and timely monitoring of student learning is an essential part of every high-growth district we surveyed.

“What gets measured gets improved,” is what nearly every district shared about the importance of common, benchmark, short-cycle, quarterly, and/or rigorous assessments. Individual school and teacher teams created many of the assessments. Odden and Archibald (2009) discovered that nearly every school that doubled its performance data had implemented common or short-cycle assessments.

Many districts/schools/principals/teams express the importance of posting and communicating targets, and introducing standards in student-friendly language. High-growth schools focus on, allocate resources for, and embed formative instructional practices. The research is clear: A literature review of 250 empirical studies of classroom assessment from more than 680 published investigations shows conclusively that formative assessment improves learning (Black & William, 1998). No other education intervention has produced more student learning gains than formative instruction, and the payoff is even greater for struggling students. Getting feedback that is both descriptive and specific can produce more educational gains than nearly any other intervention (Hattie, 2009).

Many of the high-performing districts we studied emphasize ongoing review of common assessments, curriculum, and student data. This is extremely important as teachers transition to the common core and continue to develop a greater understanding of the standards and improve their craft. Many schools spend a quality time unpacking standards and converting them into student-friendly learning targets that are explicitly communicated to all students.

	TELL Survey Question	% Agree	
		Your School	State
09.1	a. State assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.		
09.1	b. Local assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.		
09.1	c. Teachers use assessment data to inform their instruction.		



4. Use multiple measures, including growth measures, to inform improvement and accountability.

Nearly all high-growth districts understand the importance of using multiple measures. No one measure is powerful enough to use by itself. High-growth schools embrace multiple measures to uncover, discover and recover for school improvement. High-growth schools also use multiple measures for accountability. High-growth districts collect and analyze multiple data sources and use strategic measures from common assessments, assignments, year-end state tests, and value-added information to inform teachers and decision makers. Districts use performance, practice, and perception data for school improvement. When examining performance data, many districts use comparison groups and benchmarks to explore the reasons behind school and district success.

TELL Survey Question		% Agree	
		Your School	State
Q7.1	f. The school leadership facilitates using data to improve student learning.		
Q7.1	g. Teacher performance is assessed objectively.		
Q7.1	h. Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching.		
Q7.1	i. The procedures for teacher evaluation are consistent.		
Q8.1	c. Professional development offerings are data driven.		
Q8.1	e. Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers.		
Q8.1	i. In this school, follow up is provided from professional development.		
Q8.1	k. Professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers.		



5. Empower teachers and develop leaders system-wide.

Creating and leading a high-growth school or district is much too difficult for one leader. Leaders of high-growth districts know this. Teachers want to be part of the process, and allowing teachers to help create the world in which they work will ensure greater levels of ownership.

While it is important to have a high-quality teacher in every classroom, we do not believe we can improve our schools one teacher at a time. We agree with Michael Fullan, who argues that you don't improve schools by just hiring and supporting individuals, but rather by developing collaborative groups or social capital (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Distributed leadership throughout the district and school produces gains in student achievement and growth in nearly every study (Odden & Archibald, 2009; Chenoweth, Chenoweth, & Theokas, 2011; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Leithwood, Seashore Lewis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Wahlstrom, Seashore Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010).

In other words, individual success does not guarantee organizational success. High-growth districts create structures and routines for teachers to have the opportunity to lead and contribute.



TELL Survey Question		% Agree	
		Your School	State
Q5.1	e. School administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom.		
Q6.1	b. Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.		
Q6.1	d. Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.		
Q6.1	e. The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.		
Q6.1	g. Teachers are effective leaders in this school.		
Q6.5	Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school.		
Q7.1	b. There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.		
Q7.1	c. Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.		
Q7.1	d. The school leadership consistently supports teachers.		
Q7.1	j. The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school.		
Q7.1	k. The faculty are recognized for accomplishments.		
Q7.3	a. The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about leadership issues		
Q7.3	d. The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about professional development		
Q7.3	e. The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about teacher leadership		
Q9.1	g. Teachers are encouraged to try new things to improve instruction.		
Q9.1	i. Teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery (i.e. pacing, materials and pedagogy).		



CONCLUSION

In order to help all schools achieve excellence, we must make information available about best practices as it relates to all aspects of education. This means thinking about not only what teachers do in the classroom, but also what schools and districts do system-wide. Our best guides are others who have been successful. This is why we place such value on the qualitative data provided by high-growth schools in our research. The TELL Survey Data is a great place to start developing some professional and school goals.

When leveraged, the practice of limiting goals, establishing important routines, developing a balanced assessment approach, using multiple measures to inform improvement, and empowering teachers and developing leaders can lead to a highly effective system and produce high student growth in districts and schools.

TELL Survey Question		% Agree	
		Your School	State
Q10.6	Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.		

TELL REFLECTION FOR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

To complete this exercise, use the tables on the following page to identify the TELL survey questions with the highest and lowest scores for your school. As you do, note the corresponding high-growth strategy and BFK•Connect® quadrant for each survey question. The strategies and quadrants are summarized below. Reflection questions are also provided to help you think more deeply about how to respond to your TELL survey results.

Strategies for Creating a High-Growth School

1. Limit goals and/or initiative to focus on student learning.
2. Establish important structures and routines.
3. Develop a balanced assessment approach.
4. Use multiple measures, including growth measures, to inform improvement and accountability.
5. Empower teachers and develop leaders system-wide.

Quadrants of the BFK•Connect® Framework

- Yellow Quadrant (Y)- Relationships: Cultivating a supportive community
- Green Quadrant (G)- Continuous Improvement: Adapting and embracing change
- Blue Quadrant (B)- High Expectations: Maximizing every student’s achievement
- Red Quadrant (R)- Stable Environment: Creating structures and processes

After you have completed this exercise, plan a professional learning session with your staff to share the results of your TELL Survey. Share the 5 strengths and opportunities for improvement with your staff. Facilitate an activity with your staff to involve them in identifying strategies for leveraging the strengths and developing the growth areas.



Strengths

Great principals leverage their individual and school's strengths. Take time to celebrate areas of strengths and reflect on what practices contributed to these scores. Identify your top 5 scores and reflect how you will continue to leverage the strengths/practices that contributed to these scores.

	TELL Survey Question	Growth strategy (1–5)	BFK•Connect® Quadrant (Y, G, B, R)
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Reflection Questions

1. Do your top five scores indicate a particular area of strength relative to the high-growth strategies?

2. Do your top five scores indicate a particular area of strength relative to the BFK•Connect® Framework?

3. How can you sustain and celebrate your success in these areas?



Opportunities for Improvement

Next, identify the five survey questions with the lowest score for your school. These items represent likely areas of growth.

	TELL Survey Question	Growth strategy (1–5)	BFK•Connect® Quadrant (Y, G, B, R)
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Reflection Questions

1. Do your lowest five scores indicate a particular opportunity for improvement relative to the high-growth strategies?
2. Do your lowest five scores indicate a particular opportunity for improvement relative to the BFK•Connect® Framework?
3. How can you leverage the strengths identified on the previous page to grow in these areas?
4. What are some strategies for how you might improve these scores the next time the TELL Survey is administered?



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Additional Resources

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Appendix A – TELL KY & Principal Performance Standards Crosswalk

TELL Kentucky Categories	Performance Standards
Time	Instructional Leadership School Climate
Facilities and Resources	Instructional Leadership Organizational Management
Professional Development	Instructional Leadership
Instructional Practices and Support	Instructional Leadership Human Resources Management
Community Support and Involvement	Communication & Community Relations
Managing Student Conduct	School Climate
Teacher Leadership	Human Resources Management Organizational Management
School Leadership	Instructional Leadership Human Resources Management Organizational Management
New Teacher Support	Human Resources Management



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