

Gathering Student Input to Improve Teaching Practice

Summary: When teachers strive to improve their practice, they may or may not ask their direct constituents – their students – for input. An article from the *Journal of Staff Development* details a systematic and researched way for gathering effective student input.

Practical Applications

The article focuses on the work of the Tripod Project, an alliance of school districts and research organizations working to create data systems that will improve teaching and learning (for the purpose of this write-up, I will only focus on the Tripod Project's student-facing work). One of the tools is known as the "Seven Cs" and is a way to survey students in order to assess strengths and areas for growth in a classroom. The "Seven Cs," along with suggested survey questions, are:

1. **Care:** My teacher in this class makes me feel that he or she really cares about me.
2. **Control:** Our class stays busy and doesn't waste time.
3. **Clarify:** My teacher explains difficult things clearly.
4. **Challenge:** My teacher wants me to explain my answers – why I think what I think.
5. **Captivate:** My teacher makes learning enjoyable.
6. **Confer:** My teacher wants us to share our thoughts.
7. **Consolidate:** My teachers takes the time to summarize what we learn each day."

Students choose whether to agree or disagree with the statements on a scale. The Seven Cs are research-based, and teachers whose students agree more with the various statements tend to have higher student achievement. By surveying students and comparing the results against the answers they themselves would give, teachers can gain a stronger sense of how students perceive the classroom and differentiate the professional development support that they seek out.

Conclusion and Citation

Giving students regular surveys is a strong way for teachers to continuously improve, and the Seven Cs framework is a proven framework of categories and questions with which to ask students about their views of the classroom.

Crow, T. "The View From the Seats: Student Input Provides a Clearer Picture of What Works in Schools." *Journal of Staff Development*, 32.6 (Dec. 2011), pp. 24-30.
<http://bit.ly/zTW5pC>.