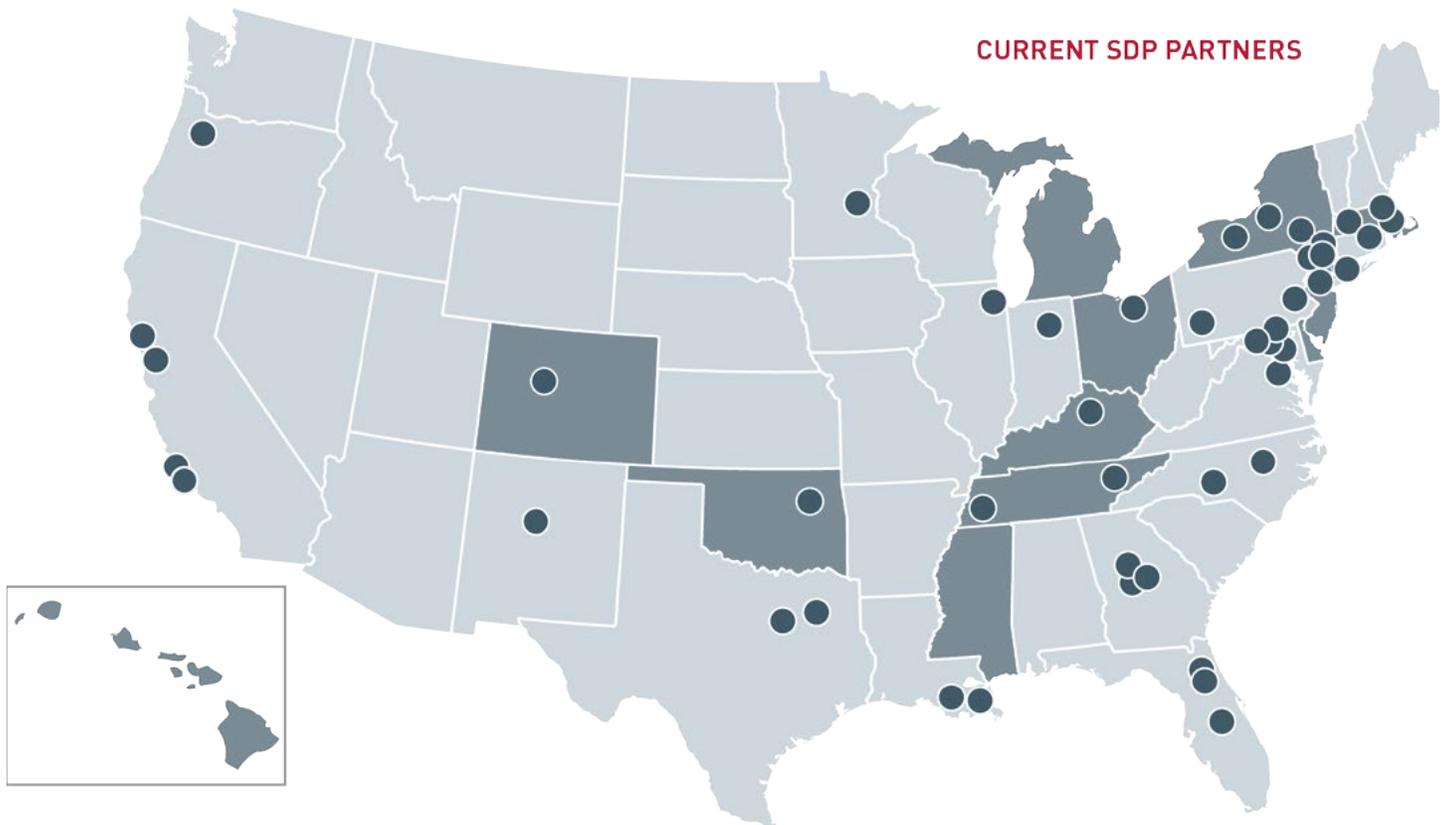




STRATEGIC DATA PROJECT

GRADUATE EXIT SURVEY HANDBOOK

**A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING, DESIGNING, AND IMPLEMENTING
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE EXIT SURVEYS**



STRATEGIC DATA PROJECT (SDP)

Since 2008, SDP has partnered with 56 school districts, charter school networks, state agencies, and nonprofit organizations to bring high-quality research methods and data analysis to bear on strategic management and policy decisions. Our mission is to transform the use of data in education to improve student achievement.

Part of the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University, SDP was formed on two fundamental premises:

1. Policy and management decisions can directly influence schools' and teachers' ability to improve student achievement.
2. Valid and reliable data analysis significantly improves the quality of decision making.

SDP's theory of action is that if we are able to bring together the right people, assemble the right data, and perform the right analysis, we can help leaders make better decisions—ultimately improving student achievement significantly.

To make this happen, SDP pursues three strategies:

1. Building a network of top-notch data strategists who serve as fellows for two years with our partners (e.g., school district, charter management organization, nonprofit, or state education agency).
2. Conducting rigorous diagnostic analyses of teacher effectiveness and college-going success using agency data.
3. Disseminating our tools, methods, and lessons learned to the education sector broadly.

The project is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

This handbook was written by Eniko Nagy, SDP Fellow Alumna and founder/executive director of [Mindsight Consulting](#), with support from Korynn Schooley, Katy Green, Ashley Snowdon, and Patty Diaz.



Introduction

Now, more school districts than ever are collecting important information about their graduating seniors, such as students' postsecondary plans and their general experiences in district high schools. This information helps districts to determine the success of schools in both graduating students on time and preparing them for postsecondary success.

Graduate exit surveys are one mechanism for collecting this important information. Surveys provide valuable information about students' postgraduation plans, college application and Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion self-reported rates, scholarship offers, experiences while in high school, and other important information that helps schools or districts better understand their ability to effectively support students.

Among the key questions exit surveys answer are:

- What do most graduating seniors plan to do after high school?
- How many of our graduating seniors have expressed an interest in attending a two-year college, four-year college, or vocational school?
- How well have our schools prepared students for college or career?
- How do cohorts of graduates compare to one another over time?
- What programs should our high schools offer to students?
- What is the relationship between K–12 student achievement and demographic data, and exit survey results? What can we learn about student performance by combining the two sets of data?

This handbook provides useful resources for designing and rolling out a graduate exit survey, as well as effectively analyzing survey results in a school district.

Why Are Graduate Exit Surveys Important?

Exit surveys are valuable because they provide firsthand insight into students' past and future experiences, and this information can have a range of different uses. By evaluating students' responses to questions about their high school experience, their interactions with teachers and counselors, and the depth of their understanding of the college application process, districts can better evaluate existing college prep programs and develop interventions where needed. Questions about students' plans after graduation and the reasons they give for their decisions can also give insight into the college enrollment and career readiness supports that the district provides to its students. In addition, exit surveys offer the opportunity to collect future contact information from students.

Many analyses can be performed using just the results from the exit surveys, but you can go further by linking the results to other data sources. For example, linking the responses to existing data (e.g., student demographic, achievement, attendance, and behavior) enables researchers to conduct even deeper analyses. In the fall, when college enrollment data becomes available from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), analyses can be performed to evaluate whether students who indicated that they planned to enroll in college actually did so.

As with any analyses, the data are valuable only if the analyses inform decision-making processes and ultimately impact policy. Presenting the information in an easy-to-interpret and action-oriented way helps make the exit survey results a truly valuable tool for district leadership.

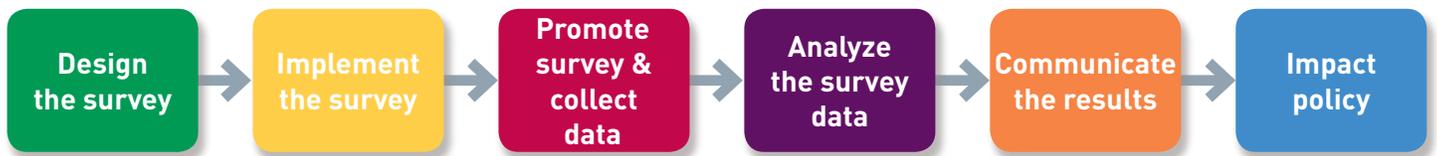
A note about the **National Student Clearinghouse**

College enrollment data can be obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). NSC matches students from a file your agency sends with college enrollment data from postsecondary institutions. Matching is done using student information such as the student ID, student name, high school the student graduated from, graduation date, and some other variables. For more information on the NSC matching process and requirements, visit www.studentclearinghouse.org/high-schools/studenttracker.

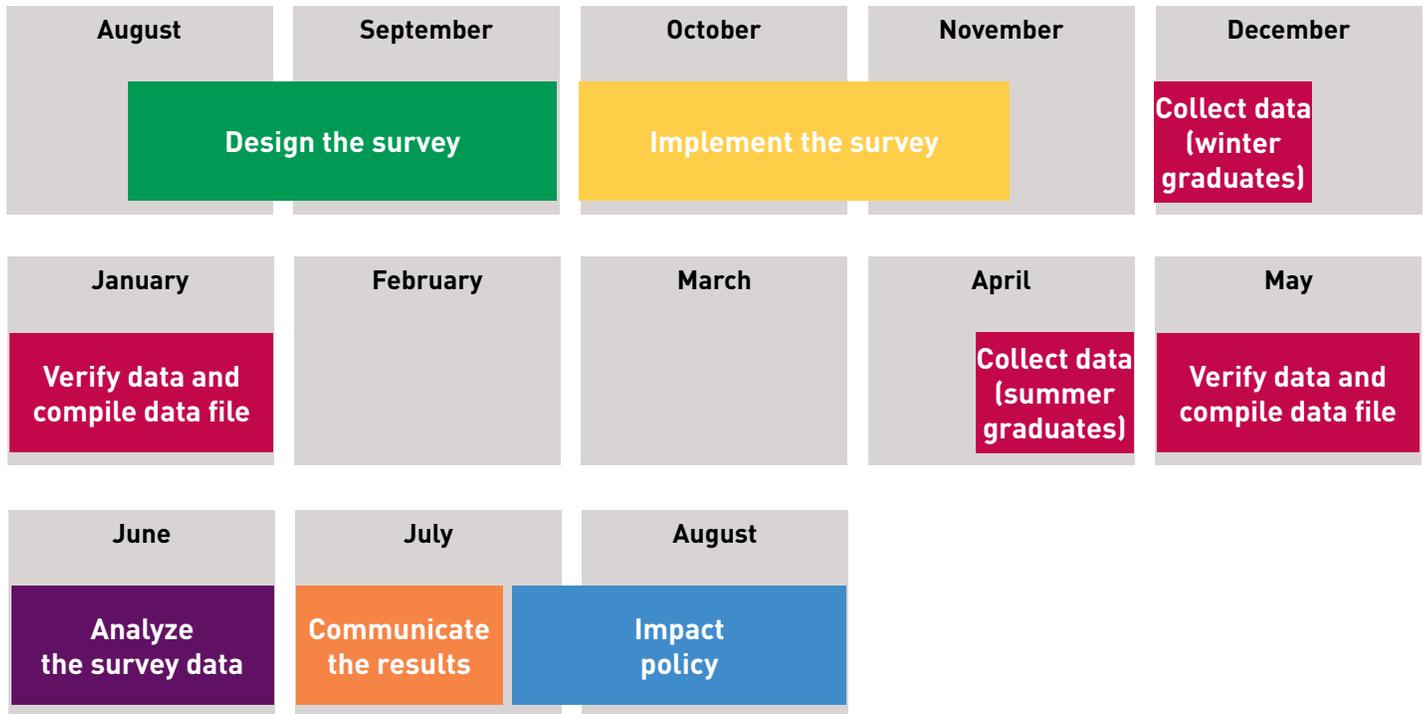


The SDP Toolkit for Effective Data Use provides resources to clean the NSC file. For reference, visit www.gse.harvard.edu/sdp/toolkit and refer to the "Clean" section of the college-going edition.

Phases of Conducting a Graduate Exit Survey



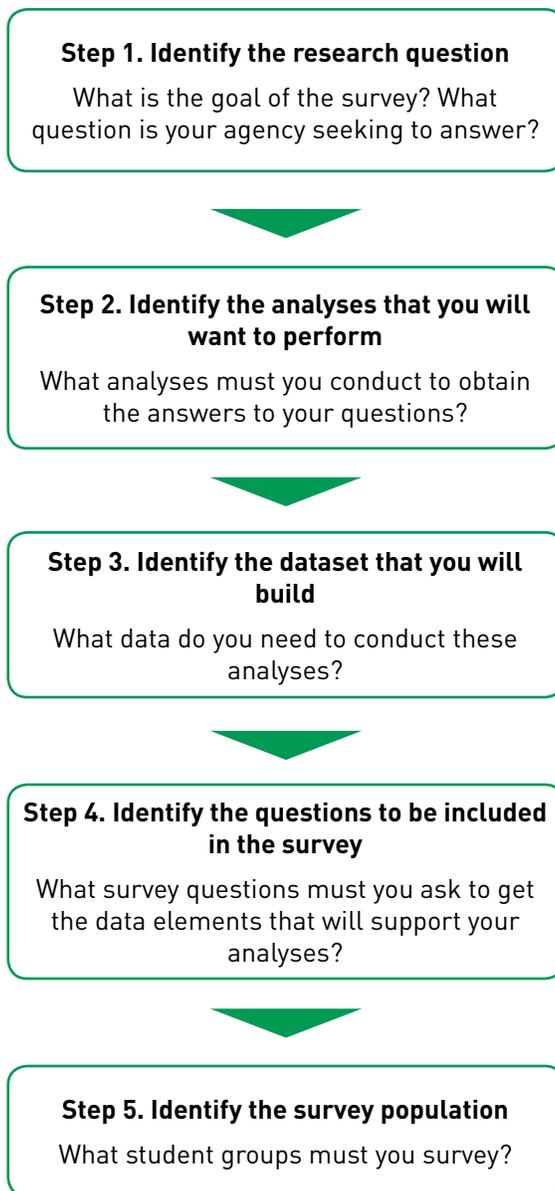
Sample Implementation Timeline



1. Design the Survey

Survey design strategy

When designing the survey, begin planning with the end goal in mind. Consider what type of information your agency hopes to obtain through this process, and then plan backward.



An example scenario

A high school science program was piloted in several schools in your district. This program was put in place to increase enrollment in the local engineering college. Now your district is interested in exploring the effectiveness of the science program.

In this scenario, you would go through the following planning phase for your survey:

Step 1) Identify the research question:

- What is the historical trend of student enrollment in the engineering college, and how might the science program have influenced this trend?

- Step 2)** In order to answer the research question, you could conduct the following analyses:
- Percentage of students who plan to enroll in the engineering college, by high school
 - Percentage change in the number of students who plan to enroll in the engineering college, comparing the previous year to the year the program was rolled out
 - Percentage change in students planning to enroll in the engineering college, comparing the three schools that piloted the science program to the district overall
 - Comparison of the percentage of students who participated in the science program who plan to enroll in the engineering college to the percentage of students of similar backgrounds from the non-participating schools who plan to enroll in the engineering college

- Step 3)** You should have the following data to conduct the analyses identified in Step 2:
- Students' self-reported plans to enroll in the engineering college
 - Population of students graduating from high school
 - Student-level indicators for participation in the science program (from district data sources)
 - Student characteristics, to compare participants against similar students who did not have access to the science program: standardized test scores, grades, SAT/ACT scores, demographic information (from district data sources)

- Step 4)** Questions to include in the survey:
- Students' fall plans
 - If student indicates that he/she will enroll in college, the name of the college in which he/she plans to enroll
 - You may want to ask about students' perception of the science program, if they participated in the program

- Step 5)** Groups of students who need to be surveyed:
- Survey both graduates who participated in the science program and graduates who did not
 - To better evaluate the science program, you may want to also survey nongraduates who participated in the science pilot

Platform

Next, you should decide how the survey will be conducted. Electronic surveys are easier to analyze, but some schools/districts may opt for paper surveys. Even if the district chooses to conduct the survey electronically, you should have paper versions available for students who are not able to take the survey on the computer.

Please refer to the appendix for a list of available survey tools.

Testing

You might consider conducting a principal component or factor analysis to gauge the overall health and robustness of your survey instruments.

Once the survey is built, counselors, IT staff, and research staff should test the survey to ensure that there are no typos in the survey, all questions are phrased in a concise, clear way, and all answer choices make sense.

Consider downloading and saving the data file containing survey responses after the testing phase is complete. While this test data file is not "real" survey data, it can be used for developing the research methodology in advance, so that most of the work is completed prior to students finishing the survey. For example, if you are using statistical software to analyze the survey data, you will be able to develop the program file using the variable names and values by referencing the test data file.

A note about **uniformity**

Often schools have exit surveys that are not used uniformly by the entire district. For ease of analyzing the data and accuracy of the reports, it is important that schools use the same survey throughout the district. If high schools in your district use different surveys, you can gather the various surveys, agree on the questions that will be asked, and consolidate both the survey questions and the platform on which they are given.

2. Implement the Survey

Questions to ask

- Who is your primary contact at each high school? This person will be responsible for coordinating the survey administration.
- When will graduates take the survey?
- How long after implementation will you continue to collect responses?
- Where and how are students taking the survey? What tools and materials should be available (computer lab, paper survey, etc.)?
- If the survey is electronic but some students take it on paper, who is entering the data from the paper surveys into the system?
- If the survey is done on paper, how is the information converted into electronic format?
- Are there any students who need special accommodations for completing the survey?
- How will absent students complete the survey?
- Will students be able to retake the survey, and what are the circumstances in which retaking the survey is allowed (e.g., their plans change, they get another scholarship offer, etc.)?
- Who will help you with performing the analyses?
- How will you report out the results to schools?
- What resources will you provide to schools interested in designing interventions or programs to address any challenges uncovered by the survey?

A note about **timing**

Administer the survey as close to graduation as possible, so that students provide accurate responses about their fall plans and about any scholarships they have received. As a general rule, about a month before graduation is a good time to launch the survey. You should allow no more than two weeks for students to complete the survey.

If there are any winter graduates, they should complete the survey before they graduate, and their responses should be added to the annual analyses.

Piloting the survey

Pilot surveys are an important element of good survey design. Pilots are run on a smaller scale using selected audience group(s) before the full-scale rollout of the final survey. They can be used to test the survey itself, as well as the survey instrument and logistics around conducting the survey.

If you decide to conduct a pilot, first ask:

- How will you determine your sample pilot population?
- How will you adjust your survey timeline to account for any changes you will make to the survey instruments as a result of meaningful information you gather from the pilot?

There are several options for piloting the survey before it is implemented in the entire district. For example, if there are winter graduates, administering the survey with these students could serve as a pilot. Alternatively, you may survey a few high schools in the summer before rolling out the survey to the entire district.

Key players

Exit survey steering committee

Be sure to organize and work with a group that includes counselors and school technology specialists, as well as central-level administrators who can impact policy based on results from the surveys. As a group, you will agree on responsibilities that include preparing the survey, sharing information about survey progress, rolling it out, verifying the responses, analyzing the data, and communicating the results.

Exit survey rollout team

Generally, the following roles and responsibilities should be considered for the team (some roles can be filled by the same person, and some roles may be assigned to more than one person, depending on the circumstances in your district). The roles assume that the survey itself has already been designed.

Survey tool management

- Load the survey to an online portal, or develop a paper version of the survey.
- Manage communication about the survey window.
- Download the survey responses.
- If applicable, preload the IDs of the students who are expected to take the survey.

Student data query

- Assemble a data file that contains demographic and academic information about the potential graduates.

IT training and/or communication

- Communicate with local school and/or central IT support team about the rollout of the survey.
- Provide materials to facilitate the technology support for teachers and students.
- Coordinate the logistics for completing the survey (e.g., scheduling computer labs, ensuring that the survey can be opened on all computers and that multiple students can take the survey on the same computer, etc.).

Counselor training and communication

- Communicate with school principals and counselors about the rollout of the survey.
- Organize counselor sessions to prepare counselors for the survey. All school counselors should be familiar with the survey questions and their interpretation, and should be able to answer any student questions about the survey.

Data entry verification

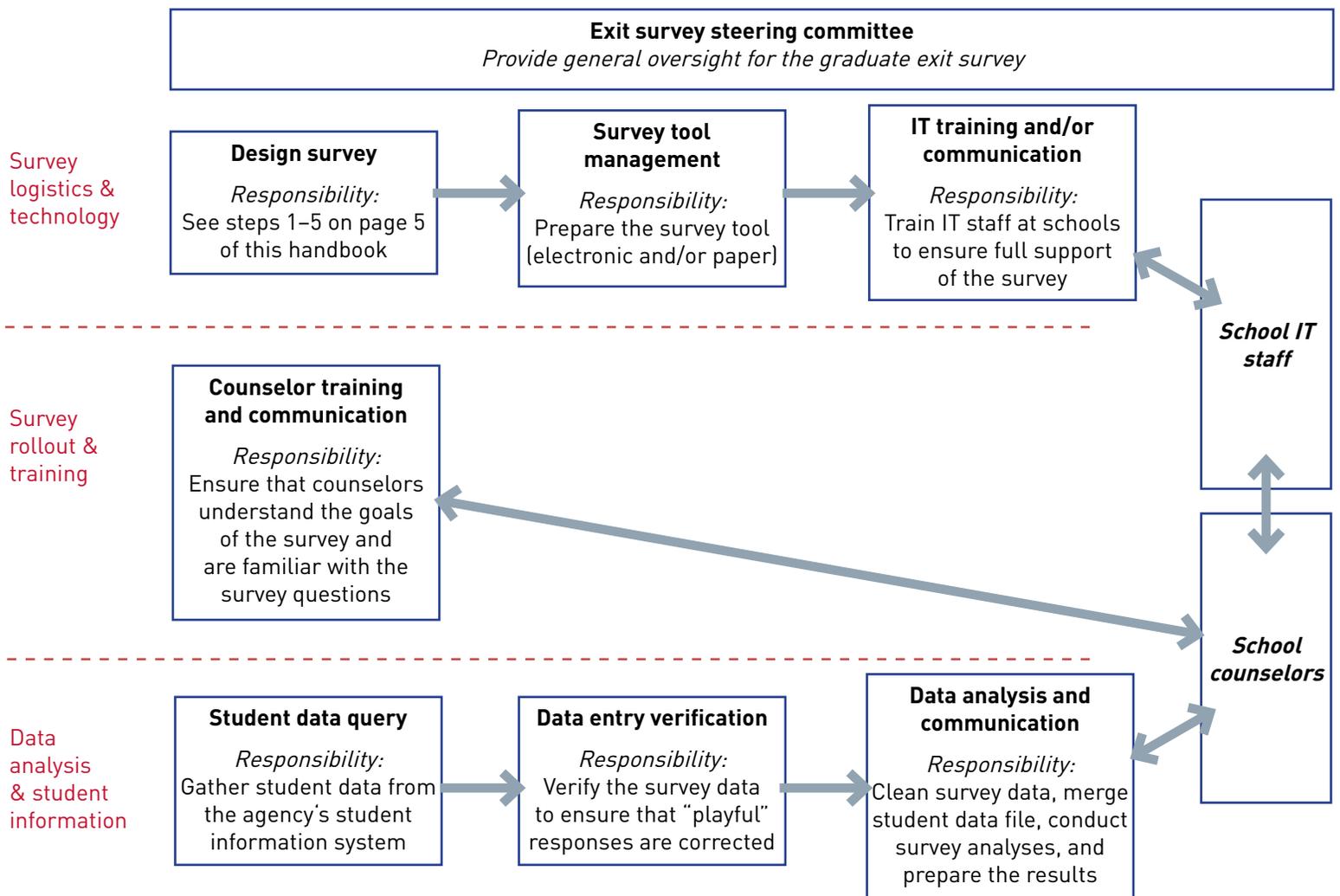
- Coordinate with schools about verifying any erroneous data after the survey closes.

Data analysis and communication

- Clean the survey data, merge other data elements, analyze the results, and prepare the results for presentation.

Verifying the students as they complete the survey

If your agency owns a professional survey tool, you may be able to preload the student IDs of those students who are expected to take the survey. This allows you to verify each student's identity when he or she starts the survey. If this option is not available to you, you should verify the respondents after the survey is closed.



3. Promote the Survey and Collect the Data

Communicating about the exit survey

The success of the exit survey depends on seamless collaboration between central office and school-level personnel. Each group listed in the previous section has to understand the importance of the survey and the district's goal relative to the survey. All teams should have a high level of familiarity with the overall survey process, a deep understanding of their role in the process, and awareness of how they need to work together with other teams.

Each team should be included in the survey planning process to ensure that no potential risks are left unexplored. Before the rollout, ensure that everyone is informed about the process. For central office staff, that can generally be accomplished by inviting everyone on the survey team to a survey rollout meeting. For school-level staff, consider organizing two meetings:

- IT rollout team meeting led by the central office IT team, in which school IT support staff learns how to support counselors and students during the survey window
- Counselor meeting led by the counseling department, where counselors learn about the survey questions and how to correctly answer them, the logistics of how students will complete the survey, and ways to communicate with students about the survey

Communicating with students can be done via email, letter, verbal communication by counselors, or an explanatory paragraph at the beginning of the survey. Below is a sample that you can alter to fit the specifics of your survey.

Please complete the following survey to help us understand your high school experience and future aspirations. Your thoughts and feedback are very important to us and will be used to help improve the high school experiences of future students.

We will link your responses to your demographic and academic information; therefore, please be advised that the survey is not anonymous. However, we will never publicly report individual responses to the surveys.

Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge. The survey should take about [...] minutes to complete. Thank you for taking the time to provide us with your thoughts!

Verifying the survey population

In the design phase you have determined the target audience for the survey. Before the rollout you should prepare a data file that contains all the students who are expected to take the survey. This will allow you to monitor completion rates during the survey window. The number of juniors and seniors provides a rough estimate of how many respondents to expect from each school. It is good practice to confirm the list with each high school. Note that getting an accurate list of graduates could be challenging because schools may be uncertain about each student's status. In most cases, however, counselors can verify if a student is expected to graduate.

Ensuring high completion rates

During the survey window, examine completion rates periodically (daily or every couple of days) and provide district-wide and school-level completion rates to each school and/or the counseling department. This will encourage schools to get all students who should complete the survey to do so. It is useful to provide each school with a list of students who have not yet completed the survey, so that schools may follow up with each student individually. If the district owns a survey tool, you may be able to generate such a report automatically.

To help drive high completion rates, define a target rate before the survey opens and communicate that rate to counselors. Since the exit survey is not anonymous and schools can be provided with up-to-date information about students who completed the survey and those who did not, very high completion rates should be expected. Many districts report completion rates over 90%.

If you observe low completion rates close to the survey window end date, you may consider extending the survey window for a few days and employing some strategies to improve completion rates. Ideas tried by partner agencies include:

- Ensuring that leadership emphasizes the importance of the survey to counselors and administrators;
- Setting aside a specific time when students will complete the survey;

- Setting completion rate targets and/or attaching survey results to accountability measures (districts that include the survey response rates in report cards may find that schools place a greater emphasis on the successful collection of the surveys);
- Conveying to counselors and administrators the ways in which results will be used; and
- Placing the responsibility in students' hands, requiring them to complete the survey before receiving a yearbook, getting prom tickets, or getting a cap and gown.

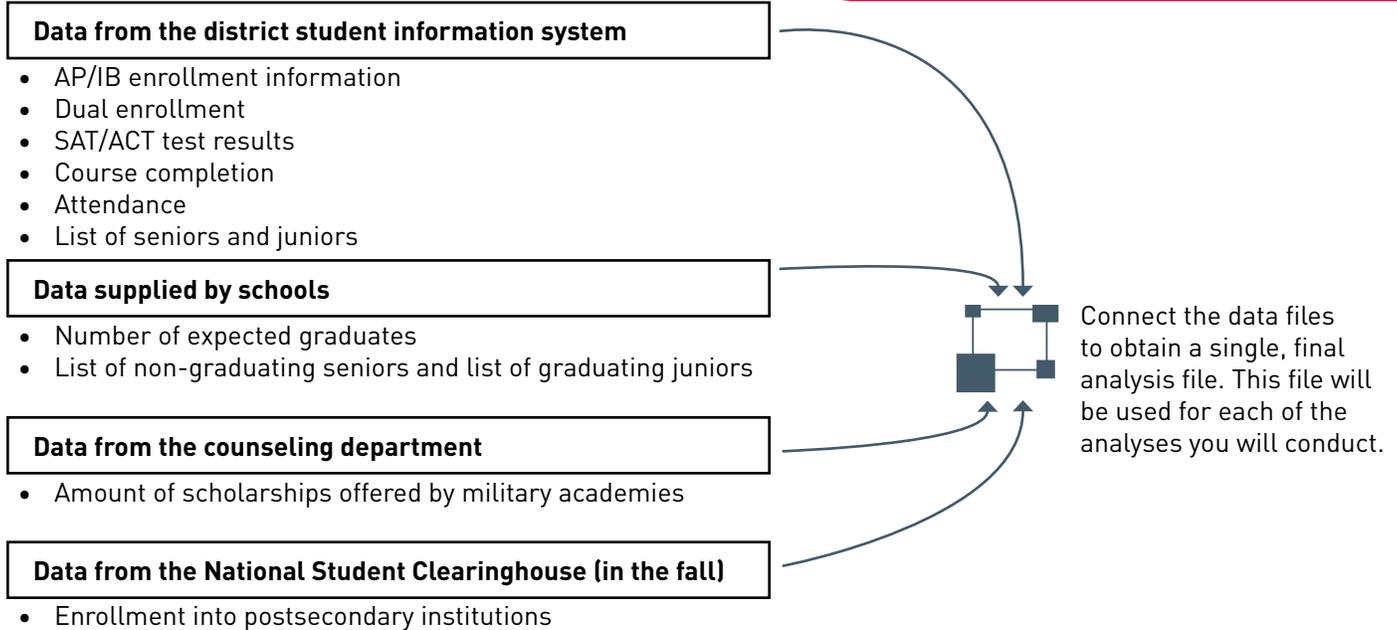
Compiling the survey results

After the survey closes, one single data file should be assembled with all student answers, including those that were taken on another platform or at a different time. Create a single analysis file by merging data from the online survey tool, data from the paper surveys (if applicable), and survey data from winter graduates. In some situations, individual high schools may have different response files (this situation should be avoided if possible). These files must be combined into one final analysis file.

Connecting datasets

Once the survey data is cleaned, the file can be merged with a student data file that contains demographic and academic information. Depending on your circumstances, there are multiple sources for collecting this information. The graphic below (adapted from the SDP Toolkit for Effective Data Use) outlines some of the various possible sources:

The SDP Toolkit for Effective Data Use provides resources to identify student-level data elements, clean the data, and connect the files to create a comprehensive analysis file. For reference, visit www.gse.harvard.edu/sdp/toolkit.



Verification and quality assurance

Once the data file is complete, it should be processed into a user-friendly format for verification.

Schools should verify that the data is correct. Examples of possible points to look out for include:

- In most cases, only graduates should complete the survey, but if nongraduates are also completing the survey in your agency, answers from these students should be clearly marked;
- Scholarship amounts should be reasonable; and
- There should be only one survey entry per student.

You may consider creating flags for records that should be checked, based on certain criteria. This allows schools to focus on reviewing the most critical records. For example, you could ask schools to verify that students correctly indicated if they enrolled in a military academy versus enlisted in the military.

4. Analyze the Survey Data

Below, we have included a list of the types of analyses that can be conducted once your merge is complete. These and other analyses (as applicable in your agency) should be considered in the planning of the survey, as described in Part 1, Step 2.

Program evaluation

Counseling program/support

- Do students feel that they have received enough information about the college application process?
- Do students feel that a career prep program prepared them adequately to start their careers?
- Do students who receive one-on-one mentoring on the college application process enroll in postsecondary institutions at higher rates than comparable peers who don't get this type of support?
- Are counseling services more effective for a particular subgroup of students than another?

Instructional programs

- Are particular afterschool programs, aimed at helping students apply to and prepare for college, effective in improving college enrollment rates among graduating seniors?
- Do students feel that they are well prepared in core subject areas?
- How do students feel about their preparedness in other factors relative to college enrollment (e.g., grades, essays, athletic programs, extracurricular activities)?

The following publications are recommended for more information.

- Richard Murnane and John Willett, **Methods Matter: Improving Causal Inference in Educational and Social Science Research**. This book offers guidance on evaluating educational policies. It covers basic principles of causal inference and introduces complex concepts such as randomization by group, natural experiments, instrumental variables, regression discontinuity, and propensity scores.
- Chung Pham and Tracy Keenan, **Counseling and college matriculation: Does the availability of counseling affect college-going decisions among highly qualified first-generation college-bound high school graduates?** (http://www.aebrjournal.org/uploads/6/6/2/2/6622240/3_cp_tk_college.pdf). This paper investigates the association between the availability of counseling services to first-generation students and the odds of a highly qualified student not enrolling in a four-year college.

Program development

Targeting at-risk students for summer intervention programs

- Which students were accepted to college but do not plan to enroll?
- Which students are at risk for not completing the steps necessary for college enrollment?

The following publications are recommended for more information.

- **SDP Summer Melt Handbook** (www.gse.harvard.edu/sdp/summermelt). This handbook contains guidance on how to measure the magnitude of summer melt among high school graduates, provides resources and tools to help design a summer intervention customized to the needs and realities of school communities, and documents the extent of the summer melt problem across several large school districts. It also provides evidence of the positive impact of additional outreach and support for students during the post-high school summer.
- **Increasing College-Going Rates in Fulton County Schools: A Summer Intervention Based on the Strategic Use of Data** (<http://hepg.org/hepg/case/98/IncreasingCollegeGoingRatesInFultonCountySchools>). This case study illustrates the work of a team of data strategists and educators working together, across institutional and departmental boundaries, to determine why some high school seniors who intend to go to college after graduation do not enroll in the fall. Together, they develop, implement, and evaluate a summer counseling intervention program called Summer PACE to ensure that more students enroll seamlessly in college. The case can be used to understand the power of using data to challenge assumptions, reveal student needs, address these needs programmatically, and evaluate results.

Predictive analytics

Developing a broader set of leading indicators for college readiness

- What is the relationship between academic data and fall plans?
- What is the relationship between attendance and fall plans?
- What are some common factors (grades, standardized test scores, behavior, attendance, demographic characteristics) among students who indicate that they are not prepared for college or career?
- What are some common factors among students who plan to enroll in less competitive colleges than they qualify for?

The following publications are recommended for more information.

- Carolyn Hoxby and Chris Avery, **The Missing 'One-Offs': The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low Income Students** (<http://www.nber.org/papers/w18586>). This paper discusses the phenomenon that the vast majority of very high-achieving students who are low income do not apply to any selective colleges or universities.

Comparative analysis

Comparing high schools

- Do some high schools appear to better prepare students than others?
- Do some schools show different results with a similar group of students?

Trend over time

- How do student responses trend over time in the district? By cohort?

Student demographics

- How do responses from different groups of students compare (e.g., gender, ethnicity, free/reduced-price lunch status, ELL, special education)?

The following publications are recommended for more information.

- **Strategic Performance Indicators (SPIs)** (<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/sdp/diagnostics/spi>). The SPIs, developed by the Strategic Data Project, are common indicators that reveal patterns and differences across SDP partners and provide a broader audience of agencies with tools for understanding their own successes and challenges. These indicators can be measured in a standard way and analyzed repeatedly over time in many education agencies.

Analysis of outcome measures

Tracking student postsecondary plans

- What do students indicate that they will do after graduation?
- What types of colleges do students plan to attend?
- What are some of the top enrolling colleges?
- What are some reasons that students give to explain their decisions?

Evaluating how the postsecondary plans materialized in practice

- Does the NSC data show that students who indicated that they would enroll in college did in fact enroll?

Types/amounts of scholarships offered to students

- What military, academic, and athletic scholarships are offered to students?

The following publications are recommended for more information.

- Analysis section of the **SDP Toolkit for Effective Data Use** (<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/sdpresources/toolkit>). The SDP Toolkit is a resource guide for data strategists who have access to student data and must collect, analyze, and report analytics associated with high school completion, college enrollment, and college persistence. This section of the toolkit provides details on analyzing outcome measures.
- **Celeste Carruthers's** research (<http://web.utk.edu/~ccarrut1> and <http://www.caldercenter.org/about/CelesteCarruthers.cfm>). Carruthers's research focuses on the economics of education with emphasis on higher education, historic education finance, public policy analysis, and applied econometrics. She has also done extensive research on charter school effectiveness.

5. Communicate the Results

It is important to summarize the key findings of the survey results in a concise, action-oriented way. This will allow for meaningful conversation with district leaders about further deep dives and root cause analyses, as well as intervention projects that could be developed to improve student outcomes.

As you analyze the survey results, think about the two or three major findings that you will present to your agency's leadership. These can include positive results (e.g., increase in the number of students who plan to enroll in postsecondary institutions) as well as findings that might warrant interventions (e.g., students from certain schools reporting lower satisfaction with their high school experience than students from other schools, or lower than district average). Presenting the findings in a comparable way, either to past results or to district averages, allows the audience to gauge what the results mean, observe trends, and be open for discussion about potential interventions.

When you present findings that could drive interventions, discuss intervention options that could take place. This approach will serve as a conversation starter, is solutions-oriented, and provides ideas that can be further explored with the leadership team.

For example, the survey results may show that two of the three high schools that participated in the science pilot program show a higher percentage of students who plan to enroll in the engineering college than in the prior year. The trend of plans to enroll in the engineering college is on the rise and has exceeded district average. The third high school shows no increase in the percentage of students who plan to enroll in the engineering college.

Based on these findings, several deep dive analyses can be conducted. Below are some examples of questions that you might want to explore, and analyses you could conduct to answer these questions.

Questions	Analyses
Could the increase in plans to enroll in college be attributed to the academic/demographic characteristics in graduates in the two high schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Control for the academic/demographic characteristics of graduates and evaluate if the increasing trend still holds.
What are the differences in how the three high schools implemented the science program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Compare the academic/demographic characteristics of the graduates who participated in the program.Calculate what percentage of the total graduates participated in the program.Talk with the schools to understand the specifics about program implementation.
If students indicated that they would enroll in the engineering college, did they actually enroll and persist? (Ask this question in the fall, when the NSC data becomes available.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Among those students who indicated that they would enroll in the engineering school, calculate the percentage of students that actually enrolled. Compare this percentage between schools that participated in the science pilot and those that did not.Find the correlation between socioeconomic status and students not following through with their plans to enroll in college.Analyze the correlation of participation in the science pilot and persistence in college.

Based on the findings to the deep dive analyses, the district may consider the following actions:

- Revise the criteria upon which the science program is offered to students,
- Extend the science program within the schools or to other schools,
- Reduce/stop the program,
- Offer summer counseling to students who are at risk of not enrolling in college, or
- Adjust how the program is conducted.

6. Impact Policy

Ideally, communicating the exit survey findings is not the last step in the survey life cycle. Instead, the results become part of the strategic decision-making process and help to improve student outcomes. In addition to designing and implementing specific intervention programs based on the survey results, districts should also discuss how existing programs and policies could be updated to drive student results. The exit survey can shed light on students' perception about a whole spectrum of the district's operation, such as high school programs, counseling services, and career and college advising, among others. All these can and should be reviewed to identify areas where policy changes could provide improvements. Some examples of potential areas you can explore in more depth using exit survey data are below.

Summer melt

Summer melt focuses on an often overlooked time period in students' transition to college: the summer after high school graduation. Recent research reveals that many college-intending students—particularly those from low-income backgrounds—encounter a range of obstacles during the post-high school summer that can lead them to change or even abandon their college plans. During this period, students are no longer members of their high schools and have yet to become integrated into a college community, leaving them isolated from professional guidance and support to address summer-specific challenges. As a result, a surprisingly high proportion of seemingly college-bound students fail to enroll in college in the fall after high school graduation.

Districts can take a variety of approaches to increase the share of college-intending seniors who successfully enroll in college. Intervention approaches include proactive personal outreach and/or digital outreach to college-intending seniors. The following publications are recommended for examples of approaches from other agencies.

- **SDP Summer Melt Handbook** (<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/sdp/summermelt>)
- Castleman and Page, **A Trickle or a Torrent? Understanding the Extent of Summer “Melt” Among College-Intending High School Graduates** (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ssqu.12032/full>)
- Castleman, Page, and Schooley, **The Forgotten Summer: Does the Offer of College Counseling After High School Mitigate Summer Melt Among College-Intending, Low-Income High School Graduates?** (http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/bencastleman/files/castleman_page_schooley_-_the_forgotten_summer_-_july_2013.pdf)
- Castleman and Page, **Summer Nudging: Can Personalized Text Messages and Peer Mentor Outreach Increase College Going Among Low-Income High School Graduates?** (http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/bencastleman/files/castleman_page_-_summer_nudging_-_april_2013.pdf)
- **Increasing College-Going Rates in Fulton County Schools: A Summer Intervention Based on the Strategic Use of Data** (<http://hepg.org/hep/case/98/IncreasingCollegeGoingRatesInFultonCountySchools>)

Program evaluation

Results from the graduate exit survey can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs at the high school level. The survey provides an opportunity to ask about students' perception of the quality of their education, their participation in in-school and extracurricular activities, and other areas that are of interest in your district. You might also want to look at the relationship between students' perception and their future goals and/or college enrollment (using data from the National Student Clearinghouse).

FAFSA completion assistance

Districts that observe low FAFSA completion rates may consider investing in counselor support by providing financial literacy resources to them. Helping counselors fully understand the financial aspects of college so that they are knowledgeable about the FAFSA forms can better prepare them to assist students with this important step. Districts may also partner with agencies that help students develop financial plans to get into college and to afford their education once enrolled. Low-income students in particular often do not know where to turn to get financial aid, how to find the right tax form, or how to complete the FAFSA.

Various FAFSA projects may be available that districts can tap into. While this is not an exhaustive list, the following organizations have participated in FAFSA projects.

- **H&R Block FAFSA Project** (http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic1232998.files//FAFSA_Project_FAQs_Oct2007.pdf)
- **U.S. Department of Education FAFSA Project** (<http://www.fsa4counselors.ed.gov/clcf/FAFSACompletion.html>)
- **UAspire** (<http://www.uaspire.org>)

Exit Survey Template Questions

The following is a collection of survey questions that have been used by SDP partner agencies.

Demographic questions

Please let us know who you are.

Please enter your student ID _____

Please enter your name and high school.

Last name _____

First name _____

High school _____

Plans after graduation

What are your plans for next fall? *<If you are using an electronic survey tool, build in page logic to take students to the appropriate page.>*

- Attend college or university
- Attend a military academy
- Enlist in the military
- Work full time
- I have other plans (please specify) _____

The college/university you will attend is...(Check all that apply.)

- Two year
- Public
- In state
- Four year
- Private
- Out of state

Which college/university will you attend? *<List the top enrolling colleges for your region.>*

Which military academy will you attend?

- United States Air Force Academy
- United States Coast Guard Academy
- United States Merchant Marine Academy
- United States Military Academy
- United States Naval Academy
- Other (please type in) _____

Which arm of the military will you join?

- Army
- Coast Guard
- Air Force
- Marines
- Navy
- National Guard
- Other (please type in) _____

If you are not planning to pursue college education at this time, what is the most important reason?

- I cannot afford it.
- I need to have an income.
- I don't like school.
- College/university education is not needed for my job.
- I have low grades/scores.
- It is important for me to join the military.
- I don't feel academically prepared.
- Other (please type in) _____

What is the highest level of education you plan to complete?

- High school diploma
- Associate's degree (2 years)
- Bachelor's degree (4 years)
- Master's degree or higher
- Undecided

College application process

Have you submitted any college applications?

- Yes
- No

Did you or your parents file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Did you or your parents file a College Scholarship Service (CSS)/financial aid profile through the College Board?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Did you apply for any scholarships?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Peer groups and family

Which of the following is most true of your friends' plans for vocational/trade school or college?

- I think most of my friends will go.
- I think some of my friends will go.
- I don't think any of my friends will go.

Have any of your older brothers or sisters gone to a vocational/trade school or college?

- I don't have any older brothers or sisters.
- Yes
- No

High school experience

Please rate the quality of your instruction in the following areas:

English/writing

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very good

Mathematics

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very good

Science

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very good

Social studies

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very good

Computer/technology

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very good

World languages

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very good

Performing/fine arts

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very good

Health/physical education

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very good

How much do you disagree or agree with the following statements?

My classes give me useful preparation for what I plan to do in life.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

High school teaches me valuable skills.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

I'm getting a good education at my school.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

An adult at this school has helped me plan for life after high school.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Working hard in high school matters for success in the work force.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

What we learn in class is necessary for success in the future.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

In which of the following activities did you participate during your senior year?

In school:

- Music
- Theater/drama
- Dance
- Sports
- UIL Academic Competition
- Journalism
- Speech/debate

Outside of school:

- Sports
- Art/music/performance
- Community service
- Environmental projects
- Other organizations
- Family care

Most teachers at my school...

Know who I am.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Really care about me.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Always try to be fair.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Listen to students' ideas.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Treat me with respect.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Pay attention to all students.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Work hard to make sure that students stay in school.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Make school interesting for me.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Have high expectations for me.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Explain things in a way I can understand.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Tell me how I do on my classwork, tests, and homework assignments.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Prepare students for life after graduation from high school.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

If you worked for pay during your senior year, how many hours a week on average did you work?

- 1–10 hours
 11–20 hours
 21–30 hours
 31 hours or more
 Not applicable

If you worked as a volunteer during your senior year (unpaid work), how many hours a week on average did you volunteer?

- 1–10 hours
 11–20 hours
 21–30 hours
 31 hours or more
 Not applicable

Counseling services

Did you use counseling services during high school?

- Yes No

If yes, which of the following services did you use?

- College search and information
 College application
 Scholarship search and information
 FAFSA PIN number and information
 Registration for tests (SAT/ACT)
 Career exploration
 Received G-Force help
 Attended presentations

Appendix

Survey Tools

The following is a list of survey tools to consider. Please note that the list is not inclusive; there are many other tools and applications available. Please also note that we have not tested each of the tools listed and cannot guarantee their functionality and value.

Online survey tools

- The Survey System
- KeyPoint
- SurveyGold
- Survey Crafter Professional
- StatPac
- SurveyPro
- SurveyMonkey
- iMagic Survey Designer
- Survey Said
- Survey Tools for Windows
- Zoomerang
- SurveyGizmo
- PollDaddy
- Constant Contact
- FormSite
- Moodle
- Google Docs
- CreateSurvey

More advanced survey tools

- Qualtrics
- QuestionPro
- LimeSurvey
- Key Survey

Tools for scanning paper surveys

- Snap Survey Software
- Opinionmeter Paper Surveys
- Zip-scan Survey
- Key Survey

Tools that integrate online survey and scanning paper surveys

- Scantron: ScanTools Plus and SurveyTrackerKey Survey

At the time this handbook was written (October 2013), comparisons and descriptions of the above tools were available at the following websites.

- <http://survey-software-review.toptenreviews.com>
- http://www.idealware.org/articles/fgt_online_surveys.php
- <http://whinot.com/blog/2012/4-online-survey-tools-which-one-is-best-for-you>
- http://wac.osu.edu/workshops/survey_of_surveys