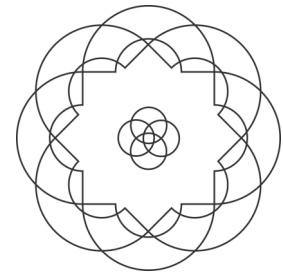


# Magnetic Schools

DePaul University Center for Urban Education



A component of the GRADS Initiative, funded in part by the Illinois Department of Human Services Office of Hispanic/Latino Affairs

There are three parts to this initiative:

- A competence-based curriculum emphasizes meaningful outcomes
- Weekly focus and assignments make student responsibilities clear
- Students track and report their own progress.

The emphasis on having students respond to questions about their own learning is designed to inform teachers and also to emphasize to students their responsibility for their own learning. This practice of surveying students is unusual but very important to get effective current insights into student progress and learning obstacles. A noted educator pointed out,

"Finally, and most overlooked among educators, are the learners themselves, ... Thus, every person, regardless of his or her age, is in charge of his or her own self-education. We are all recipients of our own advice more than that of others."

Schubert, William H. Curriculum: Perspective, Paradigm, and Possibility.  
New York: Macmillan, 1986. 6.

## Survey the Learner

To help teachers and students analyze what's working and what needs to change, each quarter students take surveys. The following items include surveys any high school can use to improve curriculum and instruction. Examples of survey results are included to show the kinds of useful information these tools can provide about how to match the curriculum to student learning needs.

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### **Student Survey about High School: Survey for the Beginning of the School Year**

*Please help us figure out the most important things schools should do to help students succeed.*

Please note your age here: \_\_\_\_\_

#### ***What are the most important reasons you come to school?***

**Check the most important reasons.**

to see my friends       because my teacher is helpful       to get a diploma  
 to prepare for college       my parents want me to       I like my classes

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(Put another reason here if there is one we didn't list.)*

#### ***What are two things you like about your school?***

1.

2.

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#### ***What are two things you would change about your school?***

1.

2.

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#### ***If you could design a new high school, what would you plan?***

What time of day would the school be open? From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

What days of the week would it be open?     M    T    W    Th    F    S    S

What kinds of courses would students take?

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### Plan Your Ideal High School

*What kinds of activities would students work on at the new high school?*

*How would the new high school help students prepare to succeed in a career?*

*What would be the most important rules for students at the new high school?*

*Plus: What else would you put in your plan?*

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### Examples of Responses, Student Survey about High School

Completed by 37 students at a Chicago public high school participating in GRADS. The survey was given to students who had dropped out and returned to school.

*What are the most important reasons you come to school?*

Check the most important reasons.

<u>34</u>	to get a diploma
<u>24</u>	to prepare for college
<u>11</u>	my parents want me to
<u>9</u>	I like my classes
<u>8</u>	because my teacher is helpful
<u>5</u>	to see my friends

*What are two things you like about your school?*

- I like the fact that you learn new things and I like the teachers.
- The teachers are really cool and helpful and the hours are reasonable, which is important.
- I like that we start late and we only have four classes.
- The way all of the teachers explain to the students and a good opportunity to get our diploma.

*What are two things you would change about your school?*

- I would like to have more classes by making the classes shorter.
- The hours in our classes and the management of absences.
- Dress code and long classes.

***If you could design a new high school, what would you plan?***

*What time of day would the school be open? From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.*

- 24% of students recommended 9:00–3:00
- 22% of students recommended 10:00–4:00

*What kinds of courses would student take?*

- Basic studies: Math, English, History, Science, and also a class of interest: Art, Music, Shop (carpentry, cars) and Culinary Arts.
- The courses that they need in order to graduate.
- The main courses needed to get a career.

*What kinds of activities would students work on at the new high school?*

- Hands on, study of their choice in the class subject and field trips.
- Auto shop/mechanics, basketball, any activities that the class/students would like.
- I would do some art activities. Pool lessons, music lessons, physical education.

*How would the new high school help students prepare to succeed in a career?*

- It would help the students get into a college of their choice.
- We would show them all types of career choices and take them to observe their job choice. We would also help them out any way we can and try to lead them in the right direction in choosing a job.

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### First Quarter Student Survey

*Dear Student:*

*This school is dedicated to your progress. To help make sure we are providing the support you need to learn, please answer this survey.*

Check your level: \_\_\_ Freshman \_\_\_ Sophomore \_\_\_ Junior \_\_\_ Senior

What is your favorite course?

What makes it a good class—what do you like about it?

What are the most important ideas or skills you are learning in the class?

What suggestions do you have to make it an even better class?

What is the subject you have the most difficulty learning?

What are you doing to help yourself learn more in that subject?

\_\_\_ getting tutoring \_\_\_ doing my homework \_\_\_ asking the teacher for help

\_\_\_\_\_  
(another way)

How can this school help you with that challenging subject?

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### Examples of Responses, First Quarter Student Survey

Completed by 99 freshman students at a Chicago public high school participating in GRADS.

#### ***What is your favorite course?***

- World Studies (32)
- Environmental Science (18)
- Gym/P.E. (12)
- Algebra (10)
- Reading/Language Arts (6)

#### ***What makes it a good class—what do you like about it?***

- Because the teacher is good and always helps us.
- We take good notes, we discuss them, and we get points.
- The type of work we are learning, the freedom we have in that class.

#### ***What are the most important ideas or skills you are learning in the class?***

- Taking better notes. (3)
- Why wars started. Who started the wars. About democracy in different places and learning new vocabulary words.
- Decimals and fractions, getting better in solving the problems.

#### ***What suggestions do you have to make it an even better class?***

- Do more projects. (4)
- To give us more homework and examples before we get a test.
- That we take a field trip to other places like a museum of Ancient Egypt.

#### ***What is the subject you have the most difficulty learning?***

- Survey Literature (35)
- Algebra (22)
- Environmental Science (12)

#### ***What are you doing to help yourself learn more in that subject?***

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
doing my homework	61
asking the teacher for help	39
getting tutoring	17
no response	5

#### ***How can this school help you with that challenging subject?***

- Provide tutoring. (15)
- We should have Study Hall. (14)
- I don't know. I think I should just get a little more help on it and should pay more attention in that class and study for the exams that I'm going to have that I know about.

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**Second Quarter Student Survey**

What level are you? \_\_\_\_\_

*1. What are the ways you learn best? Check all the kinds of activities that help you learn best. There are two blank lines at the end for you to use for items that we didn't include on the list.*

- group activities
  - class discussion
  - taking notes
  - doing homework
  - asking questions
  - writing about what we're learning
  - working with another student in class
  - working on a team on a project
  - studying for a test
  - drawing pictures to show what we're learning
  - using graphic organizers like charts, timelines, Venn diagrams
  - using what we learn to solve problems
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

*2. What would help more students do more homework?*

- group homework assignments
  - homework options—for example, you could choose to write about what you learned or make up questions (with answers) based on what you learned.
  - homework that you start in class—at the end of class, you take notes about the directions and then complete the activity at home
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

*3. What would improve student attendance?*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for completing this survey.

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## Magnetic Schools

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### Examples of Responses, Second Quarter Student Survey

Completed by 32 freshman students at a Chicago public high school participating in GRADS.

**1. What are the ways you learn best?** Check all the kinds of activities that help you learn best. There are two blank lines at the end for you to use for items that we didn't include on the list.

32	group activities
28	working with another student in class
27	class discussion
27	working on a team on a project
20	asking questions
20	drawing pictures to show what we're learning
18	taking notes
16	using graphic organizers like charts, timelines, Venn diagrams
15	studying for a test
14	doing homework
13	using what we learn to solve problems
2	writing about what we're learning

*Additional responses:*

- More projects (5)
- More skits (5)
- Kinesthetic activities (4)

**2. What would help more students do more homework?**

21	group homework assignments
20	homework that you start in class—at the end of class, you take notes about the directions and then complete the activity at home
15	homework options—for example, you could choose to write about what you learned or make up questions (with answers) based on what you learned.

**3. What would improve student attendance?**

- Versatility. When instead of having the same routine over and over, there should be some days where music is included or maybe drawing.
- Have more hands on work and music activities.
- Starting school later, 9:30–10:00 a.m.
- Having fun activities or having plenty of educational field trips.