20 tips to make surveys fly

Here are 20 strategies used by KidsMatter and MindMatters schools to increase response rates, particularly from parents and carers.

1. Test the online surveys first so that you can provide the clearest instructions in the invitation to participate, and keep the invitation short and concise.

2. At sports day or a similar whole-school gathering, put items from the Parent survey on butcher’s paper and encourage parents to respond using sticky-dots.

3. Hold an information night in the computer lab and provide assistance to encourage parents to complete the survey online.

4. Provide a translated version of the parent survey for those from non-English speaking backgrounds.

5. For schools with large cohorts of ethnic families, hold a networking evening or English language classes and support them to complete the survey.

6. With really difficult to reach parents, offer to visit their home and take them through the paper survey.

7. At staff/parent interviews, have an iPad or paper form for parents to complete the survey while they’re waiting.

8. Street-side survey – staff or students, armed with an iPad or paper form, catch parents during school pick-up.

9. Make surveys part of the KidsMatter or MindMatters launch in your school.

10. Coincide the launch of your surveys with important days like Harmony Day.

11. Ask your students about the best way to encourage parents to participate.

12. Set the Parent and Student surveys for homework.

13. Consider incentive-based strategies to encourage completion of surveys (eg. students who return a survey receive a small treat or privilege).

14. Give sufficient time. Make sure that surveys are administered at the start of the term and a new quarter, so that you have enough time during the quarter to extend the administration period if responses are slow.

15. Make it manageable. Larger schools may decide to focus on one or two year levels and work to achieve a high response rate from a smaller group of teachers, parents and student.

16. Use the KidsMatter Positive Postcards (if available) as the invitation to complete the parent survey, written by their child.

17. Celebrate mental health in your school by holding an event that involves the whole community and raise awareness about the surveys and the importance of gathering everyone’s views.

18. Parent surveys are often administered online and in hard-copy to cater for different levels of internet access. Use the online surveys to collate paper-based data. This brings all the data together in one secure place.

19. Send reminders and a message of thanks to all who participated, along with the response rate achieved.

20. Report the results of the surveys and the actions that have arisen to staff, parents and students. This will help with engagement next time around.

Find out more about the free survey tools for schools:
MindMatters surveys: [www.mindmatters.edu.au/tools-resources/surveys](http://www.mindmatters.edu.au/tools-resources/surveys)