

STUDENT HANDOUT: Using Surveys and Polls

Surveys and polls are designed to help you find out about people's attitudes, beliefs, opinions, behaviors, and experiences.

A survey can have many questions.

For instance, a survey on bullying at school would have many questions to help determine how many students experience bullying, how serious or hurtful it is, where it happens, how students feel about it, and what they think should be done about it.

A poll is limited to one question. The question can have two or more possible answers. For instance, a poll might ask:

- which of two people you'd rather vote for (2 possible answers);
- out of four brands of chocolate ice cream, which you think is best (4 possible answers);
- how you get to and from school most days (many possible answers).

A survey or poll often asks "yes/no" or multiple choice questions. Sometimes there is a space for people to add something more detailed or personal, or to give an explanation.

With a survey or poll, you don't get as much information as you would in an interview. The information you get is simpler. It is also consistent-everyone gives the same information, or data. That means you can analyze the data mathematically.

When designing a poll or survey, it is important to think about:

What you want to find out...	For instance, how many kids actually use the school bus.
Why you want to know it...	To decide whether it's possible to combine some bus routes.
Who you need to ask...	In this case, all the kids who are eligible to ride the bus.
How to word the question/s...	If you ask, "Do you like to ride the bus?" you'll get some information, but it won't be what you need to know.
Once you have the data...	You can tabulate it, analyze it, represent it graphically, and use it to draw conclusions or develop more questions.

Results of school bus poll:

- Of 300 students eligible to ride the bus, only 183 ride it three days a week or more.
- Of the kids who could ride the bus, only a little over half usually do.
- Therefore, it is worth considering how to combine bus routes.
- It might also be interesting to find out why more kids don't use the bus.

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