

Student Survey Discussion:

“What Matters to You?”

Kylene Beers and Robert E. Probst

Background of the Survey

From October 5, 2016 through October 12, 2016, we ran an online survey via Survey Monkey for students grades K–12. One thousand and ninety students responded, with the overwhelming majority of responses coming from middle schoolers (761). One hundred and fifty-eight high school students responded; one hundred and forty-six upper elementary grade students responded; and, only twenty-five students from grades K–2 responded.

Of our responders, 54% were girls, 42% were boys, and 4% responded, “I prefer not to answer.”

Goal of the Survey

The goal of the survey was to uncover the big world problems, issues, or concerns students wanted to discuss and to see how much time was devoted to these issues at school. This survey was created on Survey Monkey and the link to it was distributed through social media sources including Facebook and Twitter.

Students were given the following information and directions:

Thanks for taking this short survey. The two of us—Dr. Probst and Dr. Beers—are teachers who are interested in discovering what type of big problems kids like you would like to solve.

There is no right answer or wrong answer. We just think it's time we hear from kids.

The only thing we ask is that you give this some thought and remember that we're going to share your responses with the world!

Following that information, they were asked to answer four questions. Questions 1, 2, and 4 required students to choose a response. Question 3 allowed them to write as much as they wanted.

1. What grade are you in?

- ☐ Kindergarten–Second grade
- ☐ Third–Fifth grade
- ☐ Sixth–Eighth grade
- ☐ Ninth–Twelfth grade

2. Are you a boy or a girl?

- ☐ I'm a girl.
- ☐ I'm a boy.
- ☐ I prefer not to answer.

3. What's a problem that you'd like to work on solving for the world? Why is this important to you?

4. Do you get to work on solving this type of problem at school?

- ☐ All the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Not too often
- ☐ Never

Limitations of the Survey

This survey is not meant to be seen as a representative sample of students across the US. It has several limitations that must be noted. It was only available for one week and was only made available to those students whose teachers or parents saw the request for students to respond via the researchers' social media accounts. Also, students who did not have access to technology were not given other methods for responding.

The strength of the survey lies in the large number of responses, the open-endedness of question three, and its ability to provide a snapshot of what over 1,000 school children said was important to them.

Findings of the Survey

The survey found that students think about critical, global issues. While the younger students localized the issues ("I want to make sure all animals have a home."), older students saw the same issues in a more global context ("I'm concerned about animal rights, especially endangered animals that are poached in Africa.").

On pages 117–121 of *Disrupting Thinking*, we shared the most common responses to the question, "What's a problem that you'd like to work on solving for the world? Why is this important to you?" To briefly review, students were interested in the following broad topics:

- World hunger
- Bullying
- Terrorism
- Environmental issues (water, air, land)

- Poverty
- World peace
- Animal rights
- Cancer

When asked how much time was spent discussing these issues at school, 49% of the students responded, “never,” while 27% responded, “not too often.” This tension between what students would *like* to study and what they *do* study might account for some of the disengagement we see from students. Our recommendation is that teachers should replicate this survey with their own students, in their own classrooms.

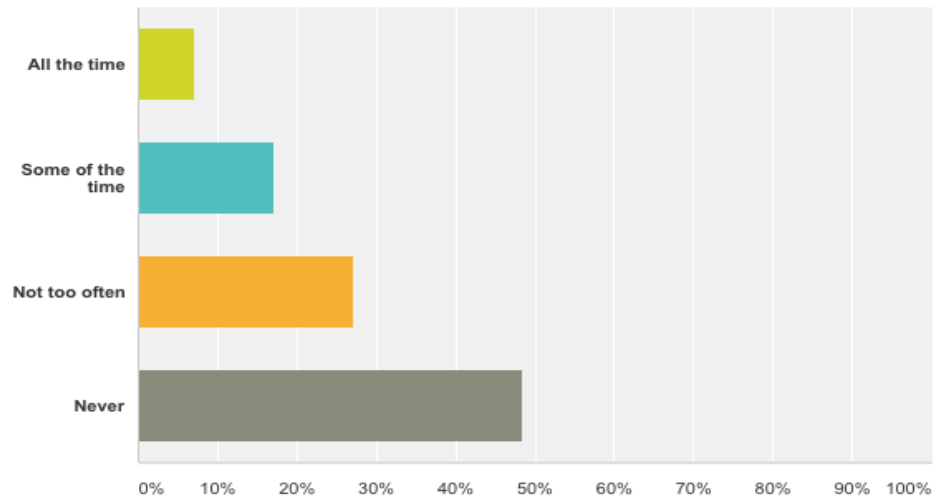
Q4

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Do you get to work on solving this type of problem at school?

Answered: 1,084 Skipped: 6



Answer Choices ▾	Responses ▾	
▾ All the time	7.20%	78
▾ Some of the time	17.07%	185
▾ Not too often	27.21%	295
▾ Never	48.52%	526
Total		1,084