

Taking the Pulse: Lessons Learned from Conducting an International Student Exit Survey

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Presentation Outline

- ✓ Introductions & Background
- ✓ Scope of the Project (online survey & video interviews)
- ✓ Rationale
- ✓ Development of the Questions
- ✓ Logistics in Administering the Survey
- ✓ Analysing Results: What we learned from “Taking the Pulse”
- ✓ Video excerpts from student interviews
- ✓ Takeaways
- ✓ Contacts

Introductions & Project Background

✓ **Introductions**

- ❖ Geoff Best & Ross Laing

✓ **Project background**

- ❖ Initiated with funding from MOE EPO Grant
- ❖ In keeping with all four of the main goals outlined in *Ontario's Strategy for K-12 International Education* document, this project involved a survey of graduating international students attending Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) schools with a focus on (1) homestay services, (2) school services and academic support, (3) student activities and engagement, (4) intended post-secondary pathways, and (5) overall reflections.
- ❖ A detailed plan and timeline was created for all stages of the project

Scope of the Project

✓ **Two-part nature of the project**

- ❖ online survey: distributed and to all Grade 12 international students in June 2016.
- ❖ video interviews: one-to-one interviews with a cross-section of graduating international students from different schools to complement the online survey and probe for deeper responses to themes and issues identified through the online survey.
- ❖ The survey and interviews were limited exclusively to graduating students for these reasons: (1) a greater likelihood that these students would have had more extensive experience in OCDSB schools, (2) English language skills amongst the student respondents would likely be stronger and enable completion of the survey with minimal support, and (3) to ascertain if and where students plan to continue post-secondary education.

Rationale

✓ Rationale

- ❖ Need to obtain information beyond anecdotal feedback that could provide data for analysis for program improvement
- ❖ Data from the online survey and the interviews would be reviewed to (1) assess student levels of satisfaction with the OCENET Ottawa International Student Program, and (2) determine best practices for supporting international students and provide recommendations for best practices
- ❖ The online survey results and the information collected from interviews with the graduating international students could serve as a baseline since the same survey could be conducted at some future point to provide a basis for comparisons

Development of Questions

✓ Online survey

- ❖ Involved numerous drafts, with a focus on just the **essential** information we wanted from the survey
- ❖ Gradually reduced the number of questions with a goal of fewer than 25 questions
- ❖ Develop the majority of questions to enable “Yes/No” or multiple choice responses, with limited opportunities for short answer responses
- ❖ Attention paid to accessible levels of language in the questions
- ❖ Concern regarding the length of time (approx. 10 minutes) required for students to complete the online questionnaire

✓ Video interviews

- ❖ Preparation of questions that elicited more individual and personal responses and opinions about the international student experience

Logistics in Administering the Survey

✓ **Online survey:**

- ❖ Setting release dates and survey completion deadline dates
- ❖ Collating names and contact information of all graduating international students
- ❖ Setting up the online questionnaire
- ❖ Testing online questionnaire for potential problems
- ❖ Including incentives to promote student completion of the survey
- ❖ Encouraging support at the school level (i.e., advisors and principals) to assist with student awareness of the survey and timely completion of the survey
- ❖ Sending out reminder email “blasts”
- ❖ Selecting and contacting “prize” winners for completing the online survey by the deadline date

✓ **Video interviews:**

- ❖ Arranging mutually a convenient time and location in schools for the interviews

Analysing the Results

✓ ***“Taking the Pulse”*** from the Online survey

***** LINK to Survey Results *****

Here is a sample of some of the data collected from the graduating international students:

- ❖ **56%** of the respondents surveyed indicated that a main goal in attending a Canadian high school was to gain entrance to a Canadian university or college
- ❖ **92%** of students felt they were welcomed to their new school
- ❖ **46%** of students changed Homestays
- ❖ **82%** of students rated the quality of teaching as good to very good
- ❖ **61%** of students got involved in school activities and extra-curriculars
- ❖ **92%** of students felt they were included as part of the school community
- ❖ **91%** of students would recommend their high school to others
- ❖ **49%** of the graduating students planned to attend a Canadian university; **12%** planned to attend a Canadian college

Analysing the Results

✓ ***“Taking the Pulse”*** from the video interviews

From the video-taped in-depth student interviews:

- ❖ It was apparent that there are inconsistencies in the ways in which international students are initially welcomed to their schools.
- ❖ In addition, the in-depth interviews also indicated that more efforts can be made to encourage, support, and require international students to become involved in school activities, especially as this involvement clearly serves as a way of making Canadian friends and developing a feeling of belonging to the school community for international students.

Video Excerpts from Student Interviews

- ✓ Excerpts from video interviews with OCDSB/OCENET international students:
 - ❖ Catalina from Colombia
 - ❖ Chung from China
 - ❖ Guilia from Italy
 - ❖ Jacopo from Italy
 - ❖ Julia from Brazil
 - ❖ May from Mexico
 - ❖ Ria from Germany
 - ❖ Scott from China
 - ❖ Zhenhong from China

Takeaways

- ✓ Focus online questionnaire which determine what essential information is required
- ✓ Develop questions to enable short responses with attention to the amount of time it takes students to complete the questionnaire
- ✓ Make everything as easy as possible for students to access and complete the survey
- ✓ Carefully consider the timing of the release of the survey and its completion date
- ✓ Use incentives and call upon all means to obtain the largest possible response rate amongst the students
- ✓ Plan on several “blasts” to remind students to complete the survey
- ✓ Do not rely on sending emails out to students since few students read emails; therefore, ask in-school international education advisors, student services and principals for support
- ✓ Choose an online survey tool that provides various ways to access data with charts and graphics indicating student responses
- ✓ Develop specific recommendations for improving your international student program and share the results of the survey with stakeholders

Contact Us

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