



10 Tips TO COLLECT STREET DATA

- 1. Audio feedback interviews:** Conduct an audio-recorded focus group with students or parents whose voices are typically absent from the decision-making table. Begin by identifying an equity challenge that you want to gain insight around. Invite a small group of stakeholders to engage in thirty to forty-five minutes of discussion. Prepare and ideally share your questions in advance. Afterward, transcribe and edit the data to highlight key themes and comments (more on this in Chapter 8). With participant permission and/or full anonymity, these data can be used at a staff meeting to ground discussions of the equity challenge.
- 2. Listening campaigns:** Listening campaigns involve a set of interviews or focus groups from which the listener assembles and organizes anonymous quotes by theme. The data are usually shared back to the community as an opportunity for growth and reflection. Conduct a series of listening sessions to gain insight and empathy toward a group of people at the margins, for example, LGBTQ students, parents of English language learners, or students with learning differences. Be sure to tap a group of at least five stakeholders so that you are able to get a sense of cross-cutting patterns.
- 3. Equity participation tracker:** When visiting a classroom, track who is called on to participate by the teacher, who volunteers to speak, and who is receiving positive versus negative feedback (verbal and nonverbal). Break this data down by race, gender, English-language learner status, gender, learning differences, and other factors. This street data tool will help you study the micro-pedagogies of equity.
- 4. Ethnographies:** If you are part of a team that meets on an ongoing basis, consider doing an in-depth ethnography of a group of students. This deep exploration of a campus subculture—for example a group of high-achieving Indigenous students—will entail interviews, observations, and soliciting written reflections from the learners. Begin by articulating an authentic inquiry question that you will investigate through the process. Obviously, get parent and student permission first.
- 5. Fishbowls:** Facilitate a fishbowl dialogue to draw out the experiences and perspectives of a group at the margins. The structure is simple: A small group engages in discussion in the middle of the room, while other participants encircle this group and listen intently, jotting down key words and phrases. For example, district staff might facilitate a fishbowl of principals, asking, “What is your daily experience like as school leader? What conditions do you need to be successful? What could we do differently to support you?” Principals can facilitate a fishbowl of teachers, parents, or paraprofessionals. Teachers can facilitate a fishbowl of students. Be sure you have identified a central equity challenge; develop and share the questions beforehand with participants. Panel discussions can serve a similar role. Be willing to listen, even when it's hard to hear.

- 6. Home visits:** Home visits are a powerful and underutilized street data tool. Over the years, I have found that many educators are fearful of doing home visits. They're either afraid of high-poverty neighborhoods and communities of color due to unconscious or conscious racism; they're afraid of imposing on families in their private sphere; or both. In the years that led to the founding of June Jordan School for Equity, the school where I was a principal, I had the privilege to do hundreds of home visits as part of a community organizing drive. I always asked the family if they felt comfortable having me in their home or preferred to meet in a community space, like a church hall or café. More often than not, they wanted to host the visit and took pride in welcoming me to their home. I felt deeply honored and, more importantly, gained street-level data on the family and student: their cultural wealth, assets, hopes, dreams, and fears.
- 7. Shadow a student:** There is perhaps no better way to empathically understand a student's experience than to put on your tennis shoes and shadow him or her. Put on your comfy shoes and, with permission of course, follow a student through his or her school day. This is particularly impactful if done by a network of leaders and focused on students who are currently outside the sphere of success. My colleague Jennifer Goldstein, a professor of educational leadership at California State University Fullerton, has principal candidates shadow an English learner for a day, with tremendous impact. A principal can also shadow a teacher throughout his or her day, and a district leader would do well to shadow a principal or assistant principal.
- 8. Equity-focused classroom scan:** Do a demographic scan of different types of classes on campus—gifted, remedial, honors, academies, career tech, advanced placement, and so forth. Note the distribution of students by race/ethnicity, gender, ELL status, students with special needs, and so forth. With this data in hand, facilitate a leadership team discussion about the current landscape of equity and access at your site, where to go next for street data, and what your equity imperative is to address this.
- 9. Structured meeting observations:** Be a fly on the wall in an upcoming team meeting. Take notes on who speaks and who does not, much like the equity participation tracker. Take notes on how the facilitator responds to different participants and whether the emotional valence of the response (positive, negative, neutral) tracks to race, gender, tenure, or other factors. Capture observation notes on the group dynamic—the energy of the room, including the ways in which people build off each other's ideas, respectfully challenge each other, and ask questions to probe one another's thinking.
- 10. Student-led community walks:** I have written about community walks for *Edutopia* (Safir, 2017a) and in *The Listening Leader* (Safir, 2017b). They are an invaluable tool for flipping the dash-board and uplifting the expertise of students and parents. To experiment with this strategy, identify social or cultural groups in your community about whom it would benefit educators to gain deeper knowledge. Invite students from those groups to meet with you to design a professional-learning experience for educators, typically comprised of two afternoons: one to read about the community and listen to student presenters and one to follow students through a guided community walk of their neighborhood. Support and empower students to design this experience with any tools at your disposal—PowerPoint slides, panels of community leaders, a lunch hosted by families in the community, an itinerary that includes important sites (markets, churches, community centers, etc.), and people.



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Tips adapted from Chapter 4 of *Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation* (Corwin, 2021)