

TALKBACK BOARD REPOSITORY

By the Capturing Connected Learning in Libraries team
and our partners



In our ongoing work with library staff around the country, one practical assessment measure has stood out as the most nimble, flexible, and useful due to its simplicity and low cost. Talkback boards present questions or prompts for patrons to answer, either by voting for possible choices with sticky dots or by writing short responses on post-it notes. Talkback boards have become a centerpiece of the *Capturing Connected Learning in Libraries* (CCLL) project because of their broad practical appeal.

In the words of our library staff partner, Mo Yang, from Anythink Libraries:

“Talkback boards are amazing because what they do is they allow customers to really interact with the information and give a really quick response that’s very genuine, and at the same time very guided, allowing us to really understand what their needs are, what their motivations are, and what we’re doing and what we could do better.”

The first step in creating a talkback board is to identify the outcomes of interest in your programming. What do you want to have happen in your programs? What do you want to have happen as a result afterwards? To get helpful information about outcomes, you’ll want to prompt your patrons to share feedback with you about their experiences. You might be asking them about their feelings, actions, interests, ideas, or next steps based on their experiences in the program.

One good way to begin drafting your prompts is to imagine what you would like to see patrons do during and after any given activity. You also want them to share aspects of their experience that you might not be able to directly observe but can inform your program design. Questions you might ask yourself when creating prompts are: (1) What might I see participants doing when things are going well?, (2) What might I see participants doing when things are going poorly?, (3) What is the range of behaviors that I might expect to see during or after a specific program?, 4) What are the possible answers I think a patron might give me in response to this prompt?

Below we provide a repository of prompts organized by common interests library staff may have. These prompts were created with our library partners, and during workshops the CCLL team held with library staff, reflecting their real-life programs. High level outcomes are listed above each section, and the prompts themselves include possible responses patrons might have about each outcome. Remember, prompts are not mutually exclusive and a patron can add their affirmation to multiple prompts in a “select all that apply” scenario.

Following the example prompts and the concepts they measure (“what it’s asking”), we provide a section on analyzing talkback board data.

Quick programmatic insights:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
After participating in today's program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would come back to another program like this one. • I discovered a new interest. • I enjoyed my time here. • I figured out something on my own. 	Provides immediate feedback on whether patrons enjoyed the programming and if their interests were supported
Today: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I discovered a skill I didn't know I had. • I got better at something I enjoy doing. • I helped someone else do something they couldn't do on their own. 	Whether the programming allowed for skill discovery, leveling up, or peer support

Interest discovery and deepening interest:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
Today: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I discovered an interest or a talent I didn't know I had. • I am more curious about things I wasn't interested in before. • The experiences I participated in are related to what I want to do for work in the future. • The experiences I participated in changed my mind about what I want to do in a future job. 	Whether participants discovered new interests or deepened existing interests through program activities Whether youth connect the program activities to interests and work they might want to do
Next time I want to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try something completely different. • Do the exact same activity I did today. • Make something similar to what I did today, but harder. • Not participate. This was a one-time experience. 	Whether youth are deepening their interests or exploring new interests

Open-ended items for discovering youth interest/designing new programming:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
Open-ended prompts (fill in answer): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Something I wished I could do in the library but couldn't was... • I would come to the library more if... • I will come to the library again because... • My favorite thing to do at the library is... 	What youths' interests are, especially interests that might lead to new ideas for program design

Leveling Up:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
<p>Today I did something new because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I felt safe trying something new. • Someone encouraged me to. • People I like were doing it. • I didn't have any choice. • I thought it would be a valuable experience for me. 	<p>Why a patron might choose to try something new</p>
<p>Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I worked on something I'm already good at. • I worked on something I'm getting better at. • I tried something new because it looked easy. • I tried something new even though it looked hard. 	<p>Whether youth are sticking with projects they already feel comfortable with or trying new things to experiment with</p>
<p>Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I thought of a new idea for something to work on. • I came up with a new way to test my idea. • I worked on an idea to solve a problem. • I designed something to help my community. 	<p>What skills, such as prototyping and problem-solving, youth are engaging</p>
<p>Today I went deeper with something I do a lot here because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I could see how it matters for my future. • It's important to who I am. • Someone encouraged me. • There was support for my learning. 	<p>Why a patron is deciding to deepen their interest</p>

Interest-related relationship building:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
<p>After working on an [activity] today, I plan to look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information related to this activity on my own (e.g., look on the web, check out a book). • Other people, in real life or online, who are interested in this activity. • Things to do that could help me get better at the activity. • Nothing related to this activity. 	Whether youth are connecting their interests to other people or seeking additional information
<p>Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I plan to connect with other people who are interested in this activity. • I learned where else I could go to get better at this activity. • I plan to go to another place where I could get better at this activity. 	Whether youth are connecting their interests across settings
<p>Today I worked on a project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By myself. • With my family. • With a friend. • With a mentor. 	How youth choose to engage in their interests and projects, alone or with others
<p>Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I shared my project with someone. • I was approached by someone who shared their project with me. • I taught someone something new. • I learned something new from someone. • I learned something or made something that I want to share with a friend or family member. 	Whether youth are experiencing peer support for their interests
<p>Open-ended prompts (fill in answer):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Today someone helped me by... • Today I helped someone else by... 	How youth give and receive feedback and help for their projects

Demonstrating curiosity:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
<p>Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I got bored with the thing I was doing so I looked for something else to do. • I couldn't figure out how to do something different so I kept doing the same thing. • I really love doing the same thing all the time. • I just wanted to do something different and I can't explain why. • I had questions about ways to do things differently. • I wanted to do something differently so I asked a staff or volunteer about it. • I looked up a way to do something differently. • I stuck to the project instructions exactly. • I used the project instructions as a jumping-off point to try something different. 	How youth are exploring new interests and potential ways to support that exploration

Coming to the program space/type of engagement:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
<p>I came today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because someone suggested that I come here. • To hangout with friends. • To use equipment to work on my own project. • To get help on a project. • To work with others on a group project. 	<p>Whether youth are coming to the library for more social or activity-centered purposes</p>

Coming to the program space/relationships:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
<p>I came to the library today because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My friend told me about it. • A teacher told me about it. • My parent or family member heard about it. • A mentor in my community told me about it. • I found it myself. <p>• How did you learn about this program? (open-ended)</p>	<p>Who in a patron's life encouraged them to come to the library</p>

Resiliency:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
<p>Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I got stuck and couldn't figure out how to move on. • I got stuck and asked a staff member for help. • I got stuck and didn't want a staff member to help me figure it out. • I got stuck and figured it out on my own. 	<p>How patrons demonstrate resilience when faced with a challenge or problem</p>

Leadership/mentoring:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
<p>Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I helped someone else with something. • I worked on a project with someone else. • I showed someone how to do something. • I volunteered in the makerspace/library. • I had an idea about how to change something about the makerspace/library. • I talked to staff about an idea about how to change something about the makerspace/library. 	<p>How youth demonstrate leadership skills and provide peer support</p>

Peer support:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
<p>Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I did everything by myself. • My partner helped me/I helped my partner. • I discussed the project with my partner before we built it. • I explained to my partner/friend why I think it's better the way we built it. • I did what my partner told me to. 	<p>What skills of collaboration and communication youth engage in during programming</p>

Showcasing work:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
<p>Today I want to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share with my family what I worked on/made today. • Share with my friends what I worked on/made today. • Bring what I worked on/made to school with me. • Show someone else how to do what I did today. • Bring someone to the makerspace to show them what I worked on today. • Talk with makerspace staff and volunteers about what I worked on today. 	<p>In what ways a patron is willing or excited to share their work with others</p>

Future interest/career exploration:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
<p>After participating in this program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Something I learned today changed my interest. • I want to research this career more. • I discovered that this is not a career path for me. • I did not learn anything new. • I feel that I am on the right path. 	<p>Whether the program aligns with their future career aspirations</p>

Teen Council/Teen Advisory Board participation:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am going to tell my friends about the library. • I am going to come back to the library. • I am here because I have to be. • I learned useful skills at the library. • I learned something new at the library. • I hang out with my friends at the library. • I like working with groups. • I like my librarian. 	<p>What opinions teens might have about participating in teen council</p>

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
<p>Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I used tools, technology, or materials I don't have access to at home or school. I did an activity I can't do at home or school. 	<p>If the library is filling a gap for youth participants by providing access to resources or opportunities</p>
<p>I came to the makerspace because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> My friend told me about it or brought me. A teacher told me about it. My parent or family member heard about it and brought me. A mentor in my community told me about it. I found it myself. 	<p>How youth are being introduced to the learning program (can help inform building strategic community partnerships and inclusive recruitment practices)</p>
<p>Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I did an activity that I've done before or learned about at home or in my community, from a friend, family member, or mentor. I learned something or made something that I want to share with a friend or family member. 	<p>Whether program activities connect to and/or build on youth's home and cultural practices</p> <p>Whether youth find what they're learning and making in the program relevant to other relationships in their life</p> <p>Whether they plan on sharing work they made, and potentially involve others</p>
<p>In this program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I feel welcome, because the program welcomes all different kinds of people. I feel welcome, because the program includes youth like me. I don't feel welcome, because the program doesn't feel like it includes youth like me. I don't feel welcome, because I don't know how I should participate or how to get help with things. 	<p>Whether youth feel a sense of comfort and belonging in the space or program</p>
<p>Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I interacted in my home language during the program. I shared something unique to my culture or identity. I felt seen and heard for the contributions I bring to the space. I felt appreciated for the knowledge I have about a subject. 	<p>Whether students feel that aspects of their identity, such as home language, are welcomed into the space</p> <p>Whether they feel seen and valued for their intersectional identities (only effective with the collection of demographic data)</p>

Demonstrating Learning:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
Did You Learn Something? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Today I learned.....” open-ended • “Today I learned a new word....” open-ended 	What types of specific learning outcomes youth might identify
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will check out materials related to today's program. • I learned something I could use at school/home this week. • I enjoyed learning how to do this. • I would like to do this project again, but harder. 	What impact programs might have on future behavior, including information seeking

Return engagement:

Example Prompt	What It's Asking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will return for other programs. • I will tell my friends to come to these programs. • I would bring my friends to something like this next time. 	Whether patrons will return and what would make them more likely to return
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I would be more likely to return if....” (open-ended) 	

Here are some practical suggestions and tips to integrating talkback boards into your program evaluation:

- For each talkback board, follow a template with the start date, end date, location of the board in the library, the question patrons are responding to, and a corresponding Excel sheet or other space for digital collection.
- You'll need to decide whether to collect sticky-dot data (voting on a range of pre-chosen prompts) or open-ended responses based on capacity for analyzing this data.
- Photos of talkback boards are great to show other library staff and stakeholders, and they serve as a backup digital record.
- **3M's Post-it Notes app** is helpful for organizing open-ended responses on sticky notes.

Analysis

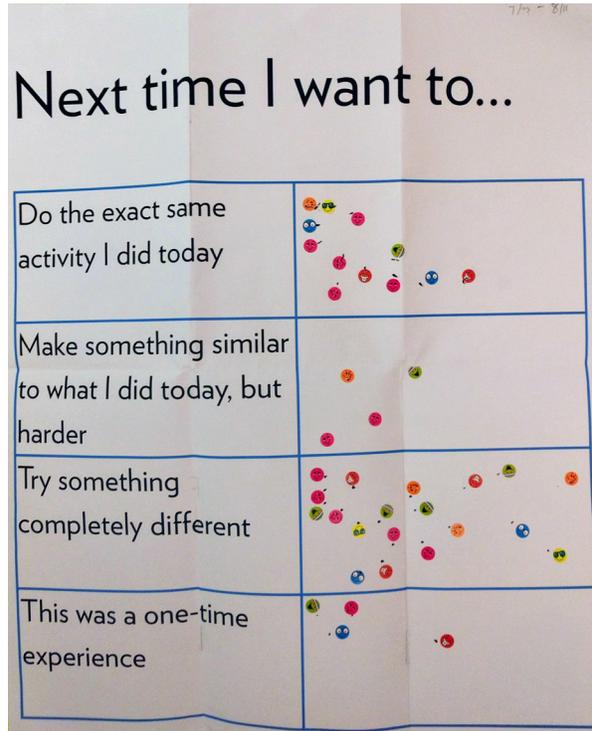
Any program trying to use feedback for development of improvement needs to consider the challenges of data analysis. It's important to be realistic from the outset about staff capacity for analyzing data. If there is not a clear plan for using the data collected, it is not likely to be a priority for staff.

Some possible uses of data analysis are to:

- Decide on programs to continue or to cut.
- Identify who participates in particular programs, who attends consistently, and who might be excluded.
- Prepare a report for a funder showing how youth are benefiting from the programs.
- Tell powerful stories about learning to parents and community leaders.
- Support staff reflection on their roles.

Once you have identified the intended use of your analysis, you are ready to think about how to structure the data analysis process to help you draw useful conclusions from the data that can inform decision making or iteration on your program design. For a step by step guide to analyzing data, visit page 33 of our [Evaluating Library Programming Toolkit](#).

Below, we provide several examples of talkback boards used by our partners, and how they analyzed their data.



The talkback board shown above was intended to capture how The Studio at Anythink’s patrons engaged in HOMAGO—that is, “**h**anging **o**ut, **m**essing **a**round, **g**eeking **o**ut” (see [Ito et al. 2019](#) for more on HOMAGO principles). Most of the patrons were found to be “messing around,” which was made clear by the large number of responses to the prompt “Next time I want to...try something completely different.” The 12 patrons who wanted to “do the exact same activity” may have been “messing around” or “geeking out,” but “geeking out” in terms of depth or “leveling up” was much less common. Fortunately, only a few patrons saw their visit to The Studio as a one-time experience!



This talkback board addresses participants' interests, with the goal of eliciting the reasons *why* they may or may not continue doing the same activity. The first and last prompts address whether youth seek out new things to do because they are bored, or because they just want to try something different. The middle two prompts are concerned with whether participants who keep doing the same thing are happy with the activity or are simply not aware of other options. As we would hope, only a small number reported being bored. One of the striking patterns visible from this board is that youth often do "the same thing" rather than trying something new. This suggests an opportunity for programming that allows youth to deepen interests they have already found, rather than a need to expand programming into new areas.

SOURCES

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