

Guide to Preschool Parent and Preschool Teacher Surveys



Tips for Successful
Survey Administration

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AdvancED is the parent organization for NCA CASI, NSSE and SACS CASI

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Why Survey Preschools?

Quality preschool programs depend upon gathering accurate information from both preschool parents/caregivers and their teachers. Consideration of their opinions is important in developing, using, and keeping quality programs.

One of the most important tasks in conducting a preschool survey is having a clear statement of purpose for the use of the results of the survey. Before a survey is given to any group, the preschool/system needs to develop answers to the following questions:

Why are we conducting this survey?

How will the results of the survey be used?

There are many reasons why preschools would use a survey to collect information. Among them are the following:

- to improve preschool parent and/or preschool teacher relations by gaining a better understanding of their views
- to include as a part of the data collected for accreditation purposes
- to conduct a study over a period of time of the views of preschool parents and teachers
- to include as a part of a preschool program improvement process
- to respond to state and/or federal program guidelines

Can I See a Sample Preschool Survey?

To request an access code to view either the preschool parent or preschool teacher surveys, please e-mail us your request at surveys@advanc-ed.org. If our surveys do not meet your needs, you may want to consider a custom survey. AdvancED will work with your staff in developing a survey that meets your individualized needs.

Your school/system may choose to administer the surveys on paper scannable sheets or via our web-based administration.

Can We Add Items to a Preschool Survey?

Your school/system can add 20 additional demographic and 20 additional forced choice items to a paper survey and unlimited numbers of items to a web-based survey. When adding items to a survey, it is important that they be quality items, whether forced-choice, open-ended, or demographic.

Appendix A contains information on writing survey items. Further information on writing survey items is contained in the guide *“Writing a Custom Survey,”* which is available to download from our website at www.advanc-ed.org

Paper surveys require an extra sheet of paper on which to add additional items. Also, written feedback from open-ended questions will need to be analyzed by the preschool.

A web-based survey administration allows for easier addition of items, but creates other administrative concerns related to the availability of the Internet to collect information.



Adding Items to Your Preschool Survey	
 Paper	 Web
20 bubbles in the “A and B” lines for demographic items such as designating a preschool within a large system. More items can be provided on a separate sheet of paper. (See Appendix B)	Unlimited number of demographic items can be included on the survey.
20 additional ordered forced-choice items with up to six choices per item on the scan sheet. Additional items provided on a separate sheet of paper.	Unlimited number of ordered forced-choice items could be included on the survey with up to 10 choices per item.
Three open-ended items included on the survey, other items can be provided on a separate sheet of paper. The preschool needs to compile the responses.	Unlimited number of open-ended items can be included on the survey. Responses are compiled by item.
Additional instructions can be provided on a separate paper.	Instructions can be changed or added to the survey.
Additional items are reported automatically in the analysis report. Reports for additional subgroups of respondents can be purchased.	Additional items are reported automatically in the analysis report. The survey administrator has the ability to generate and create sub-group reports with the purchase of Level 2 Reporting.
Additional items that are added to the Preschool Parent Spanish Opinion Inventory can be furnished to survey takers on a separate sheet of paper in Spanish (include response heading options).	Additional items for the Preschool Parent Spanish Opinion Inventories will appear in English on the computer screen. You may insert a Spanish translation next to each of your additional items (including response heading options) on the web, or provide a separate sheet of paper listing these items in Spanish.

Chart 1

Some tips for writing quality items:

1. Items should be short, direct statements
2. Words used in an item should be free of unfamiliar terms and/or abbreviations
3. Each item should address only one issue about the preschool
4. Do not use double negatives
5. Do not phrase the statement so that the respondent has to answer in a way that does not reflect his/her view
6. Examine the order of the statements—sometimes the response to one item will affect the response to another item
7. Consider writing more than one statement on important topics
8. Provide respondents with enough background information to respond to a question
9. Phrase statements so that participants can indicate their extent of agreement with the item when using an “agreement” scale

How Can We Increase Our Response Rate?

There are a number of ways to increase response rate on both paper and web-based surveys.

Personalize

- Before the survey is given, send a note or e-mail to preschool parents and/or teachers with a brief explanation of the importance of responding to the survey
- Use official letterhead
- Personalize the letters by signing in blue ink

Survey Form

- Focus on items that measure topics when adding your additional survey items
- Don't add too many survey items

Survey Administration

- Notify participants that they will be asked to complete a survey
- Include a letter with the survey explaining the purpose of the survey (see Appendix C for a sample cover letter for a paper survey and Appendix D for a sample cover letter for a web-based survey)
- Use bright color paper in a survey mailing to draw attention
- Include a self-addressed stamped envelope for returning paper surveys
- Choose a location that is easy for participants to find for returning surveys. It is important to ensure that responses remain confidential.

Follow-up

- Send a follow-up reminder, such as a postcard, letter, or e-mail to all respondents within 5-10 days after survey distribution to thank those who responded and prompt others to respond.
- Telephone follow-ups with respondents can increase response rates. Trained callers can remind respondents how to complete the survey, or offer to administer the survey over the phone.
- Mail or e-mail another notice about the survey

Incentives

- Provide a prize that is of value to the respondent (e.g., gift certificate, personalized pencils, pizza party for the class that has the most surveys returned)

Should We Use a Single Preschool or a System Administration?

Some important decisions need to be made before a preschool (or system) administers a survey. When a system plans to administer surveys to multiple preschools, it can be done in one of two ways:

- **Administration by Single Preschool**
- **Administration by System**

The following chart provides a description of the features of a school and system administration.

Single Preschool	System
Offers more accurate data per preschool – less chance of errors in preschool name designation.	Respondents may accidentally choose wrong preschool designation or not indicate their preschool in a system administration.
May require managing multiple administrations (one per preschool)	One administration
May require training/coordinating multiple survey administrators.	Single administrator
<p>➡ If you are a large system planning to administer to multiple preschools, the method you choose for administration will affect the reporting capabilities that we offer. The “A and B” lines can be used to designate individual preschools within a system. Please call AdvancED for more information about large system administrations before you begin.</p>	

Chart 2

How Can We Administer Our Survey?

Scenario for *Preschool Parent Administration*


Following a note sent home to preschool parents/caregivers signed by the preschool director, each parent/caregiver was handed a survey as they picked up their child from preschool at the beginning of the following week. Respondents were instructed to bring their completed surveys back later in the week and place them in a large manila envelope in an easy-to-find place at the preschool.

If a preschool chooses to do a group administration of a survey (when participants gather at one location), please refer to the *Guide to Administering Your Surveys* (under Group Administration), which is available as a free download from the website www.advanc-ed.org

Administration Overview

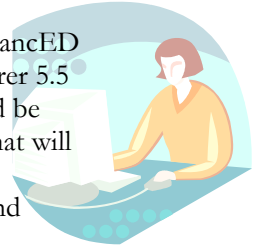
Distribute a letter that explains the purpose, states that the surveys are confidential, and encourage the participants to complete the survey. Setting the date for the completion of the survey is important. A two-week period is generally about right for a maximum response.

Administration of Paper-based Surveys

- 
- ➔ Place the letter or additional questions on brightly-colored paper so that the survey materials will stand out.
 - ➔ Make the return of surveys as easy as possible. Provide an envelope in an easy-to-find location, appoint a particular individual in the preschool to collect them, or give each respondent a self-addressed, stamped envelope.
 - ➔ Tracking non-respondents and ensuring confidential responses requires balance, and is highly dependent on the preschool. In cases where response monitoring is important and to assure that response rate is high, use IDs on the surveys or ask respondents to return a card when a survey is completed. Having an external monitor or consultant in charge of the data collection is another way to assure confidentiality.

Remember, completion of the survey and confidentiality are the major concerns of a scannable paper survey. Make sure to use strategies that will maximize your success (see Page 4).

Administration of Web-based Surveys



Please refer to your “Quick Start Guide” available on the login screen of AdvancED surveys. It is important to make sure that each participant has Internet Explorer 5.5 or Netscape 7.0 or above. Other web-browsers may be acceptable, but should be **tested prior to administration**. Each participant has a unique access code that will allow him or her to complete the survey only once. If a respondent does not complete the survey at one time, he or she can use the access code to enter and complete it at a later time—up until the stop date the administrator has set.

There are several different ways of assigning access codes:

- A name of a participant (e.g., Abigail Adams)
- An e-mail address of a participant (e.g., adams@valleyviewpreschool.org)
- A generic designation of a participant (e.g., teacher, support staff, parent).

Depending on how the access codes have been defined (e.g., name, e-mail, generic designation), the survey administrator can distribute the access codes to each participant in one of the following ways:

- E-mail an announcement from the survey administrator that includes the unique access code.
- Print letters with the name and/or generic designation, which can be distributed to participants.
- Export a list of names and/or generic designation, along with the access code, to a spreadsheet. Once exported, this information can be used to create labels or merge into a word processing program, database, or spreadsheet.
- Generate a reminder e-mail or letter.

Additional items that are added to the Preschool Parent Spanish Opinion Inventory will appear in English on the computer screen. If you expect a number of parents to take their surveys in **Spanish**, you may want to insert a Spanish translation next to each of your additional items (and the response heading options) on the web, or provide a separate sheet of paper listing these items in Spanish.

Web-based administrations may take many forms. The participants might be directed to come to a specific place to complete the survey such as the preschool, library, community center, or a business in the community. In some communities, families may have access to computers in their homes. Whatever the procedure, it is important to provide for equal opportunity for all stakeholders.

How Can We Ensure a Smooth Web Administration?

Chart 3 provides some troubleshooting tips for web survey administrations and Chart 4 provides some troubleshooting tips for respondents who may have difficulty completing the survey.

Troubleshooting Tips for Survey ADMINISTRATORS		
Please download and read the "Quick Start Guide" from the Login Screen		
STEPS	PROBLEM	SOLUTION
Logging In	The admin login screen does not display	Go to your browser's settings (under Tools); delete all cookies and temporary files. Check the URL—it should be: http://web.nsse.org/nsse-surveys/src/nsse_surveys.php
	An administrator cannot log in	Check the user name and password to make sure they are lower case. Extra spaces can also cause problems.
		If your survey administrator information is wrong, call AdvancED at 1-800-843-6773.
Previewing Surveys	Multiple administrations have been started	To see a survey, click on the word "Preview" next to the survey title. DO NOT click on the survey title—this will open a new administration—resulting in multiple administrations. If this happens, you can delete an unused administration by closing it, providing there is no data entered. To find out if you have accidentally started multiple administrations, check your survey log.
1. Setup	Instructions not read carefully (call AdvancED for all District Administrations)	This is where you enter your additional items (if you choose to do this).
2. Preview the Survey	"Preview the survey" does not display	Disable any "pop-up" blocker software. Make sure Adobe Acrobat Reader® software is loaded on computer.
3. Administer the Survey	Date does not enter	Click on "Update." Be sure to use the required format—mm/dd/yyyy.
4. Distribute Survey Access Codes	Announcement letter doesn't format correctly	Use the enter/return key to space down appropriately. Click Update. Caution: <i>Information contained between the < and > is merged from information in your database. Deleting < > will lose this information, including the unique access code.</i>
	Names or e-mail addresses imported with strange characters	A different type of file format (such as Excel) was imported. Immediately delete the incorrect names/e-mail addresses. Be sure to save your Excel® file as a single column in a text (tab-delimited) file and re-import.
	Access codes are not exported correctly	You may not be able to see the browser window. At the Explorer tool bar, click on windows to display other open windows. Be sure to right click on the export link and choose Save Target in a place you will remember on your computer.
5. Review Survey Administration	Survey needs to be reopened	If the survey has been accidentally closed and needs to be reopened, and if there are no retired access codes, call AdvancED.
6. Print Analysis Reports	Reports do not generate	Be sure any pop-up blocking software has been disabled and that you have Adobe Acrobat Reader® or Standard® on your computer.
If you need further technical assistance with Steps 1–6, please call AdvancED at 1-800-843-6773		

Chart 3

Troubleshooting Tips for Survey RESPONDENTS																																		
STEPS	PROBLEM	SOLUTION																																
Accessing Survey	Link in the e-mail doesn't work	<p>If the e-mail link is not active, copy the link and paste it into the browser's address bar at the top of the screen.</p> <p>If link is active, but doesn't go to the correct login page, the link is wrapping in the e-mail. Copy the entire link and paste it in the browser's address bar at the top of the screen.</p>																																
	Access code doesn't work	<p>If the access code is not valid, retype the access code—remember to use the hyphen.</p> <p>If the access code says that survey is stopped or closed, contact the survey administrator.</p>																																
	Respondent is on the wrong login screen	<p>If the screen is asking for a username and password, you are at the Survey Administrator's login screen—not the respondent access screen. Go to http://www.nsse.org/surveys to log in. If you are returned to the admin login screen, delete Cookies from the Internet options of your browser following the sequence that applies to your computer:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Internet Explorer</th> <th colspan="2">Netscape</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Tools</td> <td>1.</td> <td>Tools</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.</td> <td>Internet Options</td> <td>2.</td> <td>Options</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3.</td> <td>General</td> <td>3.</td> <td>Privacy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4.</td> <td>Browser History</td> <td>4.</td> <td>Cookies</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5.</td> <td>Delete Cookies</td> <td>5.</td> <td>Clear</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6.</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>6.</td> <td>OK</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7.</td> <td>OK</td> <td>7.</td> <td>OK</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Internet Explorer		Netscape		1.	Tools	1.	Tools	2.	Internet Options	2.	Options	3.	General	3.	Privacy	4.	Browser History	4.	Cookies	5.	Delete Cookies	5.	Clear	6.	Yes	6.	OK	7.	OK	7.	OK
Internet Explorer		Netscape																																
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5.	Delete Cookies	5.	Clear																															
6.	Yes	6.	OK																															
7.	OK	7.	OK																															
Completing the Survey	Respondent is returned to login when "continue" is clicked	<p>If you are returned to the login screen, enable Cookies in the Internet options of your browser following the sequence that applies to your computer:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Internet Explorer</th> <th colspan="2">Netscape</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Tools</td> <td>1.</td> <td>Tools</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.</td> <td>Internet Options</td> <td>2.</td> <td>Options</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3.</td> <td>Privacy</td> <td>3.</td> <td>Security and Privacy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4.</td> <td>Accept all Cookies</td> <td>4.</td> <td>Site Cookies</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5.</td> <td>Apply</td> <td>5.</td> <td>Allow Cookies</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6.</td> <td>OK</td> <td>6.</td> <td>OK</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>7.</td> <td>After taking survey, reset to desired security level</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Internet Explorer		Netscape		1.	Tools	1.	Tools	2.	Internet Options	2.	Options	3.	Privacy	3.	Security and Privacy	4.	Accept all Cookies	4.	Site Cookies	5.	Apply	5.	Allow Cookies	6.	OK	6.	OK			7.	After taking survey, reset to desired security level
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5.	Apply	5.	Allow Cookies																															
6.	OK	6.	OK																															
		7.	After taking survey, reset to desired security level																															
Error Messages		<p>Do not use back or forward buttons of web browser—you will get the message "Error - web page has expired."</p> <p>If you receive "An error has occurred" message, contact AdvancED right away. Please include the access code, survey title, school name, and time when the error screen displayed.</p>																																

Chart 4

Appendix A

What are Survey Items?

Surveys are made up of a series of items. An item can be a question, a statement, or even a partial statement; however, its purpose is to get a response. Sometimes a set of responses is already provided to choose from (a **forced-choice** response) and other times respondents will generate their own responses (an **open-ended** response).

One type of forced-choice item is the **ordered response** item. The most common use of an ordered response item is to measure an individual's views. Measuring perceptions generally requires an equally divided set of values where one response is "higher" or "better" than the next. In the book, *How to Ask Survey Questions* by Arlene Fink (Sage Publications, 1995), five types of response options are described:

Endorsement: definitely true, true, don't know, false, definitely false

Frequency: always, very often, fairly often, sometimes, almost never, never

Intensity: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree (Likert scale)

Influence: big problem, moderate problem, small problem, very small problem, no problem

Comparison: much more than others, somewhat more than others, about the same as others, somewhat less than others, much less than others

Each ordered response is given a **response weight**. One could say that "definitely true" has a high value and "definitely false" has a low value. The "Likert" scale, or a five-point agreement scale, utilizes five response weights beginning with "Strongly Disagree" valued at 1, "Disagree" valued at 2, "Neutral" valued at 3, "Agree" valued at 4, and "Strongly Agree" valued at 5. One advantage of using ordered response items on a survey is to allow for the use of the most common methods of summarizing data: frequency counts, the mean (average), and standard deviation.

A forced-choice item that has responses that are not ordered is known as a **categorical response or demographic** item. These items use categories for the choices. For example, "Male" and "Female" are the categories of "Gender." "Male" is not greater or higher than "Female," they are just different from each other. There are no numeric weights attached to a categorical response. Categorical or demographic items are often used to disaggregate survey responses. The common method for summarizing this data is a frequency count.

A final type of item is one where the respondent writes or keys in a response. This is called an **open-ended** item. This type of item is used to gather information and generate insight. Written responses are not easy to systematically analyze but provide a variety of views to help your understanding of a particular topic. An example of an open-ended item is "How can Valley View Preschool staff improve the quality of their program?"

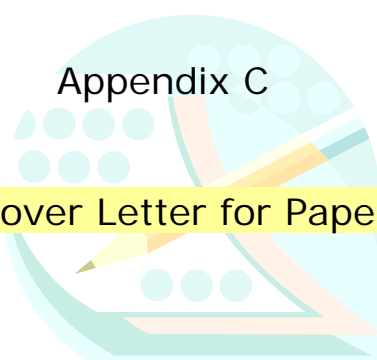
Appendix B

What Are Some Sample Demographic Statements Using the "A and B" lines?

(Lower left portion of paper-based surveys only)

_____ For School Use Only – Do not mark unless told to do so _____																																																																	
A ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ B ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨																																																																	
Preschool Teacher																																																																	
Preschool Teachers	A	My highest level of education attained (select only one) 0 – Bachelor’s Degree 1 – Master’s Degree 2 – Doctorate	B	Years of teaching experience in the preschool setting: (select only one) 0 – 0-1 years 1 – 1-2 years 2 – 2-3 years 3 – 3+years																																																													
Preschool Parent																																																																	
Preschool Parent	A	In addition to siblings, my child lives with: (select only one) 0 – Mother and father 1 – Mother only 2 – Father only 3 – Parent and step parent 4 – Grandparent(s) 5 – Other	B	My child has special needs. 0 – Yes 1 - No																																																													
Preschool Parent/ Preschool Teacher																																																																	
<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px; text-align: center;"> </div> <div> <p>Large systems: use the "A and B" lines to designate individual preschools within a system. This enables the computer to sort your data by individual preschools. This is helpful if you plan to ask for disaggregated reports by preschools.</p> </div> </div> <table border="1" style="margin: 10px auto; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #008000; color: white;"> <th colspan="2">A and B</th> <th>Preschool Name</th> <th colspan="2">A and B</th> <th>Preschool Name</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>Apple Valley</td><td>0</td><td>9</td><td>Jackson</td></tr> <tr><td>0</td><td>1</td><td>Berkshire</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>Kendall</td></tr> <tr><td>0</td><td>2</td><td>Cooper</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>Lakeview</td></tr> <tr><td>0</td><td>3</td><td>Downers Grove</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>Mulberry</td></tr> <tr><td>0</td><td>4</td><td>Everett</td><td>1</td><td>3</td><td>North Side</td></tr> <tr><td>0</td><td>5</td><td>Forest View</td><td>1</td><td>4</td><td>Oak Meadow</td></tr> <tr><td>0</td><td>6</td><td>Garfield</td><td>1</td><td>5</td><td>Pine Grove</td></tr> <tr><td>0</td><td>7</td><td>Happy Valley</td><td>1</td><td>6</td><td>Riverwoods</td></tr> <tr><td>0</td><td>8</td><td>Island Lake</td><td>1</td><td>7</td><td>Washington</td></tr> </tbody> </table>						A and B		Preschool Name	A and B		Preschool Name	0	0	Apple Valley	0	9	Jackson	0	1	Berkshire	1	0	Kendall	0	2	Cooper	1	1	Lakeview	0	3	Downers Grove	1	2	Mulberry	0	4	Everett	1	3	North Side	0	5	Forest View	1	4	Oak Meadow	0	6	Garfield	1	5	Pine Grove	0	7	Happy Valley	1	6	Riverwoods	0	8	Island Lake	1	7	Washington
A and B		Preschool Name	A and B		Preschool Name																																																												
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0	7	Happy Valley	1	6	Riverwoods																																																												
0	8	Island Lake	1	7	Washington																																																												

Chart 5



Appendix C

Can I See a Sample Cover Letter for Paper-based Surveys?

Dear *(Preschool Parent/Caregiver)*:

(Name of your preschool) would like to request your assistance with an important study of the opinions of *parents/caregivers*. The goal of this study is to improve the quality of this preschool program and its services. We would like you to complete the enclosed survey.

We plan to use the results of this survey to help guide our ongoing preschool improvement planning process. It is important to us to make sure that the decisions we make about this preschool take into account the views and opinions of *(parents/caregivers and teachers)*. The responses we receive from this survey will be maintained on a confidential basis. You do not need to sign your name or identify yourself in any way. A summary of the results of the survey will be provided to you in an upcoming issue of this preschool's newsletter and will be posted on our website.

This survey can be completed in approximately 15 minutes [add more time for additional items]. You will need to use a #1 or #2 pencil. Do not use pens. Please be sure to respond to each item and to blacken in the circle completely.

Note: for those preschools using additional items you may wish to include the following paragraph(s) in your cover letter:


We have also included a set of additional questions. These items and response categories are on a separate sheet. You may record your responses to these items in the circles on the answer sheet entitled "Additional Preschool-specific Items."

In addition, we have included a few open-ended items. Please write your responses to these items on the scan sheet. If you need additional space, please attach a separate piece of paper.

Complete this survey and return it to us in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by *(DATE)*. Do not staple or punch holes in these surveys since they are machine scored to help us achieve the most accurate survey report results.

Once again, on behalf of *(name of preschool)*, I would like to express our appreciation for you taking time to respond to this survey. We look forward to receiving your responses.

Sincerely,



Appendix D

Can I See a Sample e-mail for Web-based Surveys?

The following letter is the default announcement that is included with the web-based surveys. It is included for your convenience and may be modified to fit your specific needs. Some things to keep in mind are the insertion of the < > characters. This means that those fields are automatically pulled from the information attached to your survey administration. For example, <start date> and <stop date> will be filled in from the date you have selected as your survey start and stop date.

The <access code> will be a unique random number inserted into each announcement. The fields of name, title, and preschool are changeable fields, but will default to the information given to AdvancED at purchase of the web-based surveys.

Important: Do not delete or change any information contained within < > characters.

Dear Parent/Caregiver:

Our preschool is interested in learning more about your opinions about our program. Your views are of vital importance to this survey. Please help us! We will start collecting your opinions via the Internet beginning <start date> and ending <stop date>. In order to complete your survey, please go to:

<http://web.nsse.org/nsse-surveys/src/enter.php?code=<access code>>

and begin. (If the above link is not active, copy it and paste it in the address bar of your Internet browser at the top of your screen.)

Please give us honest opinions. The responses that you provide will be totally confidential. This preschool will only see the information once it has been analyzed.

Thank you for sharing your opinions with us. We appreciate both your time and efforts to make <preschool> a better place for your child to learn.

If you need technical assistance to complete this survey, please e-mail AdvancED at surveys@advanc-ed.org or call (1-800-843-6773) Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., CST.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact me at <email> or <phone>.

<name>

<title>

<preschool>