



uplifteducation



How Uplift Education prioritizes wellness and student voice to provide meaningful educational experiences

22,000+

students being valued, respected, and challenged to learn

45

schools capturing student voice and making data-informed decisions

4

dedicated SEL coaches supporting teachers to support their students



Challenge

A customizable survey that equitably and consistently captures student voice

Uplift Education is a public charter district serving students and their families in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex area of Texas. The district provides an International Baccalaureate (IB) education to more than 22,000 preK through 12th grade students across 45 schools.

While there are other IB schools in the region, Uplift is differentiated by their demonstrated commitment to wellness and student voice. Their holistic approach to overall wellbeing encompasses everyone in the Uplift community, from students to teachers and administrative leaders.

As part of this commitment, Uplift conducts student surveys across the district to capture student voice. They use a custom survey called the VRC (Value/Respected/Challenged to Learn and Grow) Survey, which is the district's primary measurement of how they're progressing on student culture goals. Uplift needed a survey tool that provided customization options and would make it easy to collect, analyze, and share student response data.



Solution

Data collection and reporting that supports wellness and informs meaningful improvements across the district

Uplift found the survey solution they needed in Securly Rhithm. Using Rhithm's survey customization tools, Uplift is able to tailor VRC surveys by grade level to ensure equitable access for all students.

Dr. Avril El-Amin, Uplift's Director of Social-Emotional Learning, shares that their youngest students are given five questions focused on the student-teacher relationship and can use emojis, like a thumbs up or thumbs down, to answer. Third grade through 5th grade students are asked the same questions, including two more that relate to academics, such as how comfortable they feel asking questions if they don't understand something. Finally, 6th through 12th graders receive a 10-question survey, which asks additional questions to better understand their sense of belonging.

They're now administering their VRC student surveys three times per year and relying on student response data to make decisions across their schools that make students' experiences more rich and meaningful. Dr. El-Amin shares, "We wanted to be able to create a survey that was unique to our scholars, their needs, and the goals that we have around providing the experience that we want to create for them. Rhithm provided us with that option." But Dr. Avril El-Amin, Uplift's Director of Social-Emotional Learning, shares that this is just one of the ways Uplift is using Rhithm to create a positive culture and climate.

Uplift is also using Rhithm to enhance their SEL curriculum. Each day, teachers use Rhithm's wellness check-in, a simple emoji-based questionnaire, to give students a way to express how they're feeling. Students also complete short activities depending on their responses that help them "get in Rhithm" and self-regulate in the moment.

Additionally, students' responses to the wellness check-ins provide timely student information to district and school leaders. Data can easily be shared in automated reports with administrative leaders so they can keep a pulse on student wellness and school climate, and identify areas of concern.

School teams also use Rhithm's extensive reporting capabilities to assess the effectiveness of their services or identify students who need attention, including:

- ✔ **Counselors:** to quickly identify students who may be experiencing bullying, suicidal ideation, or other safety concerns
- ✔ **Student Support Specialists:** to identify students who are in conflict and pull them into restorative circles
- ✔ **Nurses:** to proactively support students who report being hungry, sick, or injured
- ✔ **Tutoring Services:** to measure the impact of their services on students' attitudes and feelings

Dr. El-Amin shares that she has even set up automated email notifications so she knows when students provide optional write-in responses as part of their wellness check-ins. She personally reads these emails and shares students' responses with relevant staff, whether it's positive feedback about a teacher or a student sharing that they're struggling to fit in. She explains, "When students take the time to write something extra, it's because they really want an adult to know."



Outcomes

“It’s phenomenal really how many people across our district are using Rhithm data to support scholar health and wellness.”

Today, Uplift is consistently listening to and taking action on student voice to make measurable improvements in their students’ school experience.

For example, one of the VRC survey questions for secondary students asks them to rate how well their teachers get to know them personally. Previous responses revealed that less than half of students felt their teachers were making the effort to get to know them beyond their schoolwork.

To address this, Dr. El-Amin, whose doctoral studies centered on teacher-student relationships, developed a PD training specifically to strengthen teacher’s relationship-building skills. Survey data collected after the PD training showed that student ratings on the same question have improved significantly.

Additionally, VRC surveys revealed that students were being disrespectful to each other and using hurtful language. Uplift responded by emphasizing respect agreements as part of their restorative practices. Dr. El-Amin shares, “We’re not just putting them on the wall, we’re setting weekly goals.”

Uplift’s response also includes partnering with outside organizations to support students in developing respectful communications skills, as well as modifying their DEI module to include opportunities for students to just connect with each other.

Explains Dr. El-Amin, “We even created a whole new department that’s just focused on the scholar experience and creating experiences and traditions that are unique to Uplift and provide our scholars with opportunities to connect with each other. All of this came out of the VRC surveys.”

Dr. El-Amin is obviously proud to work for a district that prioritizes wellbeing. She shares that, at Uplift, this begins with investing in teachers’ wellness and social-emotional skill development.

Uplift’s dedicated team of SEL coaches focuses on supporting and training teachers first, who in turn teach and role model skills to students. This teacher-first approach has also proven successful in gaining critical buy-in and engagement.

She explains, “Sometimes teachers are reluctant initially because they don’t want one more thing to do. But when we show them how easy it is and all of the ways they can use it, then they’re on board. Some teachers even go above and beyond basic compliance and start every one of their class periods with a wellness check to get their students in Rhithm.”

- ✔ Giving students a voice in their educational experience
- ✔ Conducting large-scale collection of student voice data
- ✔ Proactively identifying and supporting students who need help
- ✔ Gaining buy-in—from teachers to leaders—for SEL and wellness
- ✔ Using data to inform PD and initiatives that improve culture and climate

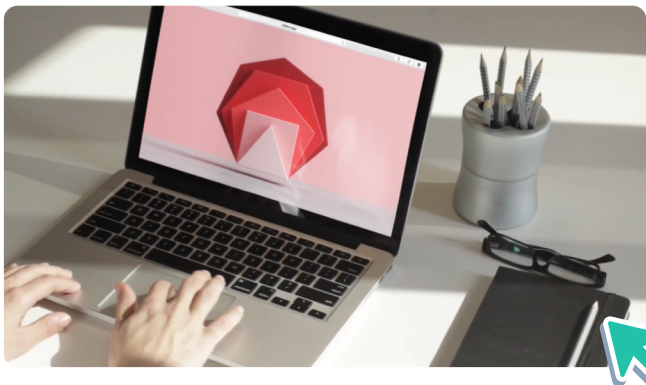
Uplift is using Rhithm so effectively across their district, it's hard to imagine they could do much more. However, Dr. El-Amin wants to see Rhithm become an even bigger part of the teacher experience.

She says, "It's not just about the data Rhithm can collect. Rhithm is very personal. It's really about checking in with yourself and how you're really feeling. When we coach teachers, we talk to them about things like the behaviors that cause teachers to leave the profession and how Rhithm can help them get in front of those and not be so reactionary. It can help them do what they originally came into teaching to do."



Equitably capture student voice and gain invaluable wellness insights.

By providing a simple and equitable way to capture student voice, Rhithm gives you actionable insight into current safety and wellness concerns at the individual student and schoolwide level, while helping your students develop self-regulation skills and get ready to learn



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