

# Assertiveness Formative Questionnaire

## Technical Report

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### Overview

#### What This Questionnaire Measures

In the context of education, assertiveness may be defined as the ability to express one's beliefs, wants, or feelings in a self-assured and direct manner. Assertiveness is a marker of **self-efficacy** and a key component of self-advocacy (Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, & Eddy, 2005). Researchers and educators consider assertiveness to be an essential skill for adolescents, as it can help them engage in effective interpersonal behaviors that contribute to their academic success and social development (Buell & Snyder, 1981; Lane, Wehby, & Cooley, 2006). In short, assertiveness can be defined as expressing your wants, needs, and thoughts while respecting others – even when it's difficult (Gaumer Erickson & Noonan, 2016).

The Assertiveness Formative Questionnaire is designed to measure a student's proficiency in the two essential components of assertiveness, which are:

1. Even when it's difficult, express my wants, needs, and thoughts.
2. Even when it's difficult, respect what others want, need, and think.

#### How This Questionnaire Is Accessed

Teachers can launch questionnaires and view both individual and aggregate student results by visiting <http://ResearchCollaborationSurveys.org>, creating an account, and following the instructions provided on the website. This website is free and available to all educators. Once students have completed the questionnaires, teachers can see graphed results for individual students as well as in aggregate. Teachers can also download a raw data file in MS Excel.

The questionnaire can be cited as:

Gaumer Erickson, A.S. & Noonan, P.M. (2018). Assertiveness formative questionnaire. In *The skills that matter: Teaching interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies in any classroom* (pp. 181-182). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

This technical report can be cited as:

Gaumer Erickson, A.S., Soukup, J.H., Noonan, P.M., & McGurn, L. (2018). *Assertiveness formative questionnaire technical report*. Retrieved from <http://www.researchcollaboration.org/uploads/AssertivenessQuestionnaireInfo.pdf>

#### How This Questionnaire Is Completed

Teachers make the questionnaire available to students by providing the URL to the survey (<http://is.gd/rcsurveys>) and a survey code (specific code for each launched survey); both the URL and survey code are provided on the website when a survey is launched. Students enter the survey code and a student number assigned by the teacher. Students complete the questionnaire by self-rating items on a 5-point, Likert-type scale. This scale ranges from 1 (*Not very like me*) to 5 (*Very like me*). The results are automatically graphed for students and available to them once they complete the questionnaire. This enables them to immediately reflect on results.

The items on the questionnaire are written at a ninth-grade reading level, per the Flesch-Kincaid<sup>1</sup> readability score. Accommodations should be provided when appropriate and can include reading the items aloud, explaining the items, and having a scribe fill in the response option.

## How to Use the Results

Assertiveness Formative Questionnaire results can be used by both teachers and students. To ease interpretation, results are displayed on a 100-point scale. These scores can be interpreted similar to grades (e.g., 70-79 is a C). Results by essential component support reflection on relative strengths and areas for improvement.

Students can use the questionnaire results to gain an understanding of the differences between assertive, aggressive, and passive behaviors. They can use their individual results from the questionnaire to address assertive behaviors that they can cultivate or strengthen.

Teachers can enhance their instructional practices by determining which characteristics of assertive, aggressive, or passive behavior are most prevalent in their students, and then reinforcing the importance of assertiveness. After combining this targeted instruction with guided and independent practice, teachers can continually re-administer the Assertiveness Formative Questionnaire and alter their instruction accordingly. This allows teachers to engage in a process of data-driven decision making in order to increase their students' fundamental ability to confidently express their wants, needs, and opinions while respecting others, even when the situation or topic is difficult. Additional resources for teaching assertiveness are available at <http://CCCFramework.org/Resources.html>.

## Technical Information

The Assertiveness Formative Questionnaire was developed in 2015 by Research Collaboration (<http://ResearchCollaboration.org>). An extensive review of related research resulted in the identification of two components that are essential for successfully applying assertiveness. Following this literature review, it was determined that assertiveness requires individuals to express their wants and needs, and to respect what others want and need, even when it's difficult.

The questionnaire was tested for reliability using Cronbach's coefficient alpha<sup>2</sup> with 2,071 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. Of the 2,071 students that completed the survey, 981 (47.4%) were female, 1004 (48.5%) were male, and 86 (4.1%) did not report gender. The dataset includes 182 students in fifth-grade, 189 in sixth-grade, 566 in seventh-grade, 492 in eighth-grade, 172 in ninth-grade, 236 in tenth-grade, 128 in eleventh-grade, and 106 in twelfth-grade.

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<sup>1</sup> Kincaid, J.P., Fishburne, R.P., Rogers, R.L., & Chissom, B.S. (1975). Derivation of new readability formulas (automated readability index, fog count, and flesch reading ease formula) for Navy enlisted personnel. Research Branch Report 8-75. Chief of Naval Technical Training: Naval Air Station Memphis.

<sup>2</sup> Cronbach, L.J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, 16, 297-334.; Cronbach, L.J. (1988). Internal consistency of tests: Analyses old and new. *Psychometrika*, 53, 63-70.

Overall, the Assertiveness Formative Questionnaire was found to be moderately reliable (20 items;  $\alpha = .733$ ). The *express* subscale consisted of 13 items ( $\alpha = .747$ ), and the *respect* subscale consisted of 7 items ( $\alpha = .682$ ). When converted to a 100-point scale, the bottom quartile ranged from 28 to 62 and the top quartile ranged from 75 to 100.

The questions that make up each component are listed below. Questions that are framed negatively and therefore reverse scored are designated with '(N).'

#### Express Wants, Needs, and Thoughts

1. I stand up to my friends if they are doing something I don't feel comfortable doing.
2. I speak up when someone is not respecting my personal boundaries like "no cheating off my homework" or "I don't let friends borrow money."
3. I often have a hard time saying "No." (N)
4. I express my opinions, even if others disagree with me.
5. When an argument is over, I often wish I would have said what was really on my mind. (N)
6. I tend to just go along with what everyone else wants instead of stating my own thoughts. (N)
7. I sometimes avoid asking questions for fear of sounding stupid. (N)
8. I tend to bottle up my emotions rather than talk about my feelings. (N)
9. If I disagree with my teacher, I talk to him or her about it.
10. If a person has borrowed money (or a game, clothes, or something else of value) and is overdue in returning it, I talk to the person about it.
11. I'm usually able to tell people how I'm feeling.
12. If I don't like the way someone is being treated, I speak up about it.
13. I speak up about things I really care about.

#### Respect Others

14. I am careful to avoid hurting other people's feelings, even when I feel that I have been wronged.
15. I have a hard time controlling my emotions when I disagree with someone. (N)
16. I avoid attacking someone's intelligence when I disagree with their ideas.
17. I listen to other people's opinions, even if I disagree with them.
18. In disagreements, I make sure that I understand other points of view.
19. In discussions, I communicate that I am listening through body language (nodding my head, avoiding rolling my eyes).
20. Even in an argument, I don't interrupt the other person.

# Questionnaire

## Assertiveness Questionnaire

Please **CHECK ONE** response that best describes you. Be honest, since the information will be used to help you in school and also help you become more prepared for college and careers. There are no right or wrong answers!

Student ID \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

	Not very like me  Very like me				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I stand up to my friends if they are doing something I don't feel comfortable doing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I speak up when someone is not respecting my personal boundaries like "no cheating off my homework" or "I don't let friends borrow money."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I often have a hard time saying "No."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I express my opinions, even if others disagree with me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. When an argument is over, I often wish I would have said what was really on my mind.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I tend to just go along with what everyone else wants instead of stating my own thoughts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I sometimes avoid asking questions for fear of sounding stupid.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I tend to bottle up my emotions rather than talk about my feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. If I disagree with my teacher, I talk to him or her about it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. If a person has borrowed money (or a game, clothes, or something else of value) and is overdue in returning it, I talk to the person about it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I'm usually able to tell people how I'm feeling.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. If I don't like the way someone is being treated, I speak up about it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I speak up about things I really care about.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I am careful to avoid hurting other people's feelings, even when I feel that I have been wronged.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I have a hard time controlling my emotions when I disagree with someone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I avoid attacking someone's intelligence when I disagree with their ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I listen to other people's opinions, even if I disagree with them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. In disagreements, I make sure that I understand other points of view.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. In discussions, I communicate that I am listening through body language (nodding my head, avoiding rolling my eyes).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Even in an argument, I don't interrupt the other person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>