

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
FOR THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS
2007-2008 and 2009-2010 PRIVATE SCHOOL UNIVERSE SURVEY
Section B

B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

BI. Respondent Universe

The target population for the survey consists of all private schools in the United States that have any of grades K - 12, or comparable ungraded levels.

B2. Procedures for Data Collection - Statistical Methods, Estimation Procedures, Accuracy, and Anticipated Problems

The universe frame to be used by NCES for the 2007-2008 PSS will be composed of the 2007-2008 PSS list frame and the 2007 area-search frame. The list frame originates from the 2005-2006 PSS and is updated with current membership lists from private school associations and private school lists from state departments of education and social services (for kindergarten programs)¹. The area list is developed after a systematic search of 124 randomly selected primary sampling units (PSUs). The list of schools found in this search is unduplicated with the list frame to yield the area-frame schools. The area frame is used to represent schools missing from the list frame. The 2005 area frame search was conducted in 124 PSUs and identified 555 unduplicated schools, weighting up to represent 3,125 private schools.

The universe frame to be used by NCES for the 2009-2010 PSS will be composed of the 2009-2010 PSS list frame and the 2009 area-search frame. The list frame will originate from the 2007-2008 PSS and is updated with current membership lists from private school associations and private school lists from state departments of education and social services (for kindergarten programs)². The area list is developed after a systematic search of 124 randomly selected primary sampling units (PSUs). The list of schools found in this search is unduplicated with the list frame to yield the area-frame schools. The area frame is used to represent schools missing from the list frame. The 2005 area frame search was conducted in 124 sample areas and identified 555 unduplicated schools, weighting up to represent 3,125 private schools.

A combination of mail, telephone follow-up, and personal visit follow-up will be used to insure an anticipated 95% response rate for the 2007-2008 and 2009-2010 PSS. (The 2009-2010 PSS will also have an Internet response option.) The first mailout will be followed by a reminder card (one week later) and by a second mailout to nonrespondents (one month later). Six weeks after the second mailout non-interview cases will be turned over to the CATI facility for telephone follow-up and, when necessary, to field staff for personal visit follow-up.

B.3 Methods for Maximizing Response Rates

¹ See section F for an example of a letter used to request a private school list.

² See section F for an example of a letter used to request a private school list.

Several procedures will be employed to ensure high response rates. The following elements of the data collection plan will contribute to the overall success of the survey.

1. Visible support from top-level federal education officials.

Top-level education department officials addressed the representatives of several private school associations at a NCES sponsored meeting that took place in October 2006. The officials demonstrated their support of the survey by informing the representatives of the timing and objectives of the survey and by soliciting the representatives' cooperation to ensure the survey's success.

2. Interactive field monitoring with extensive follow-up (by mail, telephone, and personal visits) of nonrespondents.

The survey will use mixed survey modes - mail, telephone, and personal interviews, as needed, to achieve high response levels in 2007-2008 and 2009-2010. The 2009-2010 PSS will also offer an Internet response option. The data collection agent, The Census Bureau, assumes that the majority of the schools surveys will be completed by mail. Follow-up telephone or in-person interviews for the mail nonrespondents will be conducted to achieve an expected response rate of 95 percent.

In addition, the survey content is based upon administrative information that is commonly on file in private schools. The ease of answering the items should increase the respondent's willingness to complete the questionnaire.

B.4 Test of Procedures and Methods

The survey questionnaire and procedures will be based on those used in the 2005-2006 PSS³. See section G for a copy of the 2005-2006 questionnaire. Since only some formatting changes and the addition of asking for the school email address (item 23) were made to the questionnaire (see section H for email address item), there is no need to test the 2007-2008 PSS questionnaire.

B5. Statistical Consultants, Agency Staff, and Contractors

In addition to review within NCES, Dennis Schwanz and Steven Tourkin of the Census Bureau reviewed the PSS sample design and related matters for statistical quality, feasibility, and suitability to the overall objectives of the survey. The following individuals have oversight of the data collection and analysis:

³ The 2005-2006 PSS contained an Internet response option. This will not be offered with the 2007-2008 PSS, but will be offered with the 2009-2010 PSS.

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