

National Center for Education Statistics, IES U.S. Department of Education

To: Rochelle Martinez, OMB
Through: Edie McArthur, NCES and Kathy Axt, RIMG
From: Laura LoGerfo, NCES
COR for HSLs:09
Date: February 11, 2008
RE: Permission for Submission of Emergency Clearance Request for Field Test Sampling and Recruitment of Schools

The High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs:09) is the most recent installment in the series of NCES' nationally representative longitudinal studies of high school students. The HSLs:09 will assess students' math during the fall of their 9th grade year and again in the spring of most participating students' 11th grade year. The 11th grade survey and test administration may include a brief assessment of scientific literacy for students as well. The study will also survey students, their parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and school administrators twice during the secondary school years and follow students into their postsecondary years. Responses from these surveys should inform our understanding of how students navigate the transition between high school and the postsecondary world. What courses, majors (or first job), and careers students decide to pursue, when, why, and how are crucial research questions for HSLs:09.

Unfortunately, the timeline for HSLs:09 is quite truncated due to an unanticipated event. The call for proposals was released in mid-December 2006, but the contract was not awarded to RTI until July 6, 2007. The field test is slated to begin in Fall of 2008, which is about seven months from now. The full-scale data collection is scheduled to commence in the Fall of 2009. I understand that approval for the survey instruments will take at least four months. However, findings from the PISA and PIRLS technical review panel meetings indicate that sampling for the full scale data collection should occur at least a year in advance of the start date to the data collection. Thus it is clear that sampling should be begun and completed as early as possible.

To ensure that the study remains on track and on time, sampling and school recruiting for the field test must begin by February 2008 at the very latest. The field test is scheduled to start September of 2008, and the six-month lead time should be sufficient for review and revision of the instruments before we enter schools.

We are seeking approval to submit the clearance request for the sampling for the field test as an emergency clearance. On a parallel track, we will submit the clearance package for the field test and full-scale activities as a regular submission in February 2008. As you heard in last month's meeting of the HSLs:09 technical review panel (thank you for your participation), the contractor has drafted matrices of possible survey constructs and instruments for the field test data collection. These instruments are being revised based on the feedback from the technical review panel in November and January.

This emergency clearance request is only for the sampling design and recruitment, so the contractors may begin sampling, contacting, and recruiting schools. Meanwhile the rest of the OMB package will proceed through the normal approval process, which may last from four to six months. As soon as instruments are revised and finalized, we will amend and update the OMB package.

Thank you for understanding the time constraints that govern this study and its success and allowing this cognitive clearance process.