

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

To: Rochelle Martinez, OMB
Through: Michelle Coon, NCES and Kathy Axt, RIMG
From: Laura LoGerfo, NCES
COR for HSLs:09
Date: October 22, 2008
RE: List of Changes for OMB Clearance for HSLs:09 (0316-2008)

This memo requests a nonsubstantive amendment to the OMB package for the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs:09). The HSLs:09 field test is designed to provide sufficient data to develop precise IRT (Item Response Theory) parameters for the brand-new mathematics assessment. Additionally, the field test checks the operational procedures proposed in the OMB package for the full scale HSLs:09 in the fall of 2009. The field test, currently underway, targets 55 schools and approximately 1,500 student respondents. To meet these targets, half of the schools are offered a \$500 school-level incentive (that may be used at the school's discretion but which is recommended for technology investments) and the other half is given no incentive.

During field test recruitment, if a district has schools sampled for both the field test and the full scale study, the school district is informed of which schools are involved in both administrations. One such school district has set conditions for its schools' participating in the field test. The specific district not only has 3 schools in the field test but also has 10 schools selected for inclusion in the full-scale HSLs:09 administration next year. This district represents 13% of the full-scale sample. The field test schools in this district receive the \$500 incentive, and the district administrator has expressed that unless the schools in the full scale study also receive the \$500 incentive, the district will deny access to the field test and full scale schools.

Unfortunately, at this time, the experiment to determine the most appropriate full-scale incentive is not completed. Preliminary results show little if any difference in the response rates between schools with the incentive and schools without the incentive. Thus this district is requesting an incentive that may or may not be in place for the full-scale study.

With the field test already well underway, losing 3 field test schools poses a significant problem for reaching the critical number of respondents needed to validate the mathematics assessment. This district represents 13% of the full-scale sample, and as such, losing this district will require adjustment of the sample at great cost at this point in the study (recruitment is already underway for many full scale districts and schools).

Thus we request that one exception be made for this specific district. The district can be promised a \$500 incentive for each school to participate in the field test and full scale HSL:09 administrations.

This problem may also arise with other school districts that include both field test and full scale HSL:09 schools. By January, once we have been able to analyze the results of the incentive experiment completely, we will develop a plan to address these districts and schools. The decision to address this problem will be postponed until empirical results are analyzed and conclusions drawn. Back-up plans will be addressed as well.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at Laura.LoGerfo@ed.gov or 202.502.7402. Thank you very much for your patience and feedback.