

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau
Annual Survey of Local Government Finances (School Systems)
OMB Control Number 0607-0700

Part B – Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

1. Universe and Respondent Selection

The universe consists of approximately 15,638 school systems (as counted for the 2006-2007 survey cycle in a December 2008 listing of school systems in the Governments Integrated Directory) and is distributed as follows:

Independent School Districts	12,726
Dependent Educational Service Agencies (ESAs)	1,225
Dependent School Systems (not ESAs)	1,687

The Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has maintained annual reimbursable agreements with the Census Bureau that require the collection and dissemination of universe data. This requirement has been in place since the 1994-1995 fiscal year survey period. The Census Bureau is currently in the process of conducting a universe survey (or study) for the thirteenth consecutive year and expects this to continue in the foreseeable future. The full universe (15,638 for 2006-2007 survey cycle) of school systems are included in the annual survey.

Due to the use of central collection from state education agencies, the response rate for the 2006-2007 school district finance survey cycle was 99.5 percent.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

Form F-33. This form contains the elementary-secondary education finance items collected jointly by the Census Bureau and NCES. In practice, this form serves more as a data processing guide rather than as a data collection instrument. The Census Bureau relies heavily on collecting this public school system finance data centrally at the state government level. All states provide significant amounts of these data centrally to the Census Bureau via the Internet using File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

The Census Bureau facilitates central collection by accepting data in the variety of formats the states choose to transmit. Currently, twenty-one states provide the Census Bureau electronic copies of state-specific detailed education finance data files, and the Census Bureau maintains programs for converting these data from the state agency format to the Census F-33 format. The remaining thirty-one states reformat state-specific data files into the Census Bureau’s format prior to submitting the data electronically to the Census Bureau. A copy of the Form F-33 for 2007 is shown in Attachment A.

Form F-33-1. This form is a three-question electronic mail sent to respondents at the beginning of each survey period soliciting the assistance of the state education agencies (SEAs) in providing data centrally for their public school systems. Census Bureau staff use the responses on this “form” to plan for the processing of state education agency data submissions.

Form F-33-L1. This form is a supplemental letter currently sent to the school systems in four states for the 2006-2007 survey cycle: Delaware, Florida, Nevada, and Rhode Island. In those four states, the education agencies collect adequate detail in all aspects of school finance except for assets. Respondents provide the assets data on this letter, and it is merged with the other data collected from the state education agencies. A copy of the F-33-L1 for 2007 is shown in Attachment A.

Form F-33-L2. This form is a supplemental letter currently sent to the school systems in seven states for the 2006-2007 survey cycle: Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio, and Virginia. In those seven states, the education agencies collect adequate detail in all aspects of school finance except for indebtedness. Respondents provide the debt data on this letter, and it is merged with the other data collected from the state education agencies. A copy of the F-33-L2 for 2007 is shown in Attachment A.

Form F-33-L3. This form is a supplemental letter currently sent to the school systems in five states for the 2006-2007 survey cycle: Arizona, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Vermont. In those four states, the education agencies collect adequate detail in all aspects of school finance except for assets and indebtedness information. This letter combines the items requested on the forms F-33-L1 and F-33-L2. Respondents provide both asset and debt data on this letter, and it is merged with the other data collected from the state education agencies. A copy of the F-33-L3 for 2007 is shown in Attachment A.

All school districts are canvassed in the survey. As such, there is no sampling error for the school district estimate. However, data are subject to nonsampling error such as respondent error, coverage error, nonresponse error, and processing error. To mitigate the impact of the nonsampling errors, we use editing and imputation procedures.

Use of a less frequent than annual data collection cycle would result in unacceptable information gaps concerning the financing of the Nation’s schools.

3. Methods to Maximize Response

Nonresponse does not have a major impact on the data from this survey. State education agencies provide most of the finance data centrally for their school systems and this survey benefits from the multiple methods that states can use to increase response. Fiscal data reported to state education agencies by school systems are important factors in determining how much state money each school system receives, and thus this incentive helps minimize non-response.

The Census Bureau uses traditional mail canvass techniques to enhance response for the forms it sends to school systems to obtain debt and assets information. Conducting second and third mailings to non-respondents, initiating central data collection techniques, and soliciting audit reports in lieu of completed questionnaires are several methods the Census Bureau uses to maximize response.

4. Test of Procedures or Methods

The Census Bureau has not recently conducted tests for the school systems portion of its local government finance program. The wording on the form has not substantially changed since 2006.

5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection

Statistical Aspects monitored by:

Carma R. Hogue, Chief, Statistical Support & Consulting Staff, Office of Statistical Methods & Research for Economic Programs, (301) 763-4882

Data Collection questions to:

Wendy Stralow-Owens, Survey Statistician, Educational Finance and Special Statistics Branch, Governments Division, (301) 763-1510

Attachments to the Supporting Statement:

Attachment A. Forms for 2007 F-33, F-33-1, F-33-L1, L2, and L3

Attachment B. Comparison Study of NPEFS and F-33 Surveys

Attachment C. List of Consultations

Attachment D. Letter in support of F-33 collection from Bureau of Economic Analysis