

**Response to AAUW Public Comment on High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL:09) First Follow-up,**

**OMB Control Number 1850-0852**

**February 15, 2011**

Public Comment:

From: Scott, Beth [mailto:scottb@aauw.org]  
Sent: Wednesday, January 19, 2011 5:32 PM  
To: oira\_submission@omb.eop.gov

Dear Education Desk Officer,

Attached please find comments from the American Association of University Women (AAUW) on the proposed High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL:09) First Follow-up Field Test 2011, OMB control number: 1850-0852.

Since its founding in 1881, AAUW has been committed to making the dream of a free public education available to all students. With changes in the workforce over the last 130 years, higher education is becoming less of a luxury and more of a necessity. The proposed field test is meant to provide data on: 1) how students navigate the transition between high school and the postsecondary world; 2) what courses, majors, first job, and careers students decide to pursue; and 3) when, why, and how the students make those decisions, especially in regards to science, technology, engineering, and math courses, majors, and careers.

AAUW places particular importance on the three following areas of the field test: 1) Cross-tabulation of data; 2) Collecting additional data; and 3) Data accessibility. As for collecting additional data, AAUW suggests that the Department of Education consider including four additional sets of data in the field test: 1) Why women and girls pursue, or don't pursue, STEM fields; 2) Students, especially women, entering non-traditional careers; 3) Students' stated goals; and 4) Factors affecting wages.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this important issue. I look forward to working with you on the issue of student achievement data. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Regards,

Beth Scott

Beth Scott  
Regulatory Affairs Manager  
AAUW, 1111 Sixteenth St. NW, Washington, DC 20036

## Response:

Thank you for your interest in and support of the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs:09). In particular, the AAUW has commented upon the questionnaires currently planned for the field test of the First Follow-Up data collection. It is important to note that, as a test of the procedures and instruments for the full scale HSLs:09 First Follow-Up study, the field test includes far fewer students, parents, school administrators, and counselors than those who will be surveyed in the full scale data collection (Table A-6 in the Supporting Statement Part A of the clearance package shows the expected number of respondents in the field test, while Table A-7 shows the same for the full scale collection). Data from the field test will not be released for public use and analysis. Based on the results of the field test, the procedures and the specific questionnaires may be revised to ensure that data of research and policy interest are collected. Your comments will thus aid in the development of a timely and pertinent HSLs:09 First Follow-Up.

### ***Cross-Tabulation of Data***

*AAUW suggests the field test data be cross-tabulated and disaggregated by all possible topics, including gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, mobility, disability, urban, rural, suburban districts, and other population characteristics wherever possible. This information would be very valuable, because under the current accountability system, schools do not have to report graduation rates by sex, schools are not held accountable for student performance by sex, and student performance and graduation rate data is not cross-tabulated (i.e., within each race, by sex) for either reporting or accountability purposes. The data from the field test would be a valuable resource to assess student graduation and performance levels, as well as other variables. Having the most detailed information possible will provide the best picture of these students' opportunities, challenges, and choices. School districts, educators, and policy-makers cannot create the right solutions if they do not have all the possible data. For example, knowing that the dropout rate varies dramatically between girls of color, with Native American girls dropping out twice as often as Asian girls, could have an impact on education policies.*

In response to your comment about cross-tabulation, we plan to report both Base Year and First Follow-Up data by gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, disability, and urbanicity wherever possible. These data will be publicly available to the greatest extent possible, given that personally identifiable information of survey respondents is protected. A good source for these cross-tabulated data is the First Look report that is always published with the full scale data release. The data from the HSLs:09 base year data collection will be released in mid-April 2011, whereas the First Follow-Up data will be collected in the spring of 2012.

### ***Collecting Additional Data***

*AAUW suggests that the Department of Education consider including four additional sets of data in the field test. They are: 1) Why women and girls pursue, or don't pursue, STEM fields; 2) Students, especially women, entering non-traditional careers; 3) Students' stated goals; and 4) Factors affecting wages. The field test offers an invaluable opportunity to track a diverse group of students over a long period of time, and the Department should embrace this opportunity and collect as much data as feasible. This information would significantly benefit educators and policy-makers, and we urge the Department to consider tracking and collecting this additional data.*

1. (...) Collecting data about why women and girls pursue or turn away from STEM education and careers will be extremely helpful for developing public policies and programs encouraging their engagement.
2. (...) Since the data will track what careers the students pursue and enter, AAUW suggests the data collection methodology be configured to capture: 1) students in career and technical education (CTE) programs and 2) students entering nontraditional fields, such as women entering automotive repair and construction. (...) Although several programs, such as the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), track participants, there is currently no means to track students enrolling in CTE programs and entering nontraditional careers. Capturing this data would help policy-

makers and educators design curricula and programs to further encourage women and girls to pursue vocational and nontraditional careers.

3. (...) AAUW suggests the Department of Education consider tracking students' stated career goals in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and comparing those answers with the students' choices and accomplishments over the upcoming decade. Currently, the survey does not ask students what they actually want to become, i.e. a scientist, doctor, lawyer, teacher, etc., and it would be valuable to include this question and assess the resulting data, particularly the rate of the students' achieving these goals.
4. (...) AAUW recommends that the Department of Education produce the *Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Studies (B&B)* every two or three years and produce publicly available statistics in a timely fashion. This provides valuable data, which can allow for analysis of possible wage gap causes. (...) While the B&B data is very valuable, it is not published as frequently as AAUW would like. The B&B studies provide rich nationally representative information on the working lives of U.S. college graduates. This data provides a wealth of information on the respondents, as well as a retrospective look at the undergraduate experience. It covers a variety of topics including: enrollment (field of study, institution type, attendance and enrollment patterns, financial aid), employment (occupation, hours per week), plans and expectations for the future (employment after graduation, graduate school enrollment, family formation, civic participation, and undergraduate experiences (coursework, institutions, credits earned, grade point average), and basic demographic information (sex, age, race/ethnicity, marital status). For the college educated workforce, the B&B data provides a comprehensive view on the factors affecting wages. Having this dataset every two to three year will shed further light on reasons and factors behind the male/female wage gap.

In response to your comment on collecting additional data, we respond to each topic in order:

1) *Why women and girls pursue, or don't pursue, STEM fields.* In addition to collecting data on students' math and science course taking, the student questionnaire contains specific questions designed to address the gender gap in STEM fields.

The survey asks students to report how they perceive themselves and how others perceive them in regards to achievement in STEM fields. Along with the gender indicator variable, a strong analysis might focus on gender differences across such perceptions.

"How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"; "You see yourself as a math [/science] person"; "Others see you as a math [/science] person"

The HSLs:09 survey asks students and parents to report how they perceive traditionally stereotyped gender-based assumptions about strengths and weaknesses in STEM fields.

"In general, how would you compare males and females in each of the following subjects?"; "English or language arts [/Math/Science]: Females are much better, Females are somewhat better, Females and males are the same, Males are somewhat better, Males are much better"

2) *Students, especially women, entering non-traditional careers.* While we do not ask in HSLs:09 about careers for this First Follow-Up, as the bulk of respondents will be juniors in high school, we do ask about intended majors of those who indicate that they are planning to enter post-secondary education at some point.

"What field of study are you considering?"; "Computer and information sciences; Architecture, engineering, and related technologies; Biological sciences; Mathematics and statistics; Physical science; Mechanic or repair work, such as repair or HVAC; Culinary arts; Cosmetology; Health professions, such as doctor, nurse, or clinical work; Liberal arts or humanities; Business, finance, and office support; Security or protective services, such as police, firefighting, or forensics; Social sciences and history; Education or teaching; Psychology; Other (Please specify); Don't Know"

Those respondents who indicate that they will work after high school are asked questions about their expected job.

“Do you have a specific workplace in mind for this job?:” “Yes; No”

“How much do you expect to make in your job after high school?” [open-ended response]

More detailed career data are collected in NCES’ Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:12) and in the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002/2012 (ELS:2002/2012). HSLs:09 will likely collect detailed data on career goals in the next full scale Follow-Up.

3) *Students’ stated goals.* We collect information on goals, and particularly whether these goals include postsecondary education.

“What is most likely to be your main activity in your first year after high school?”; “Enroll in a certificate or Associate’s degree program in a two-year community college or trade or technical institute; Enroll in a Bachelor’s degree program in a college or university; Obtain an occupational license or certification; Enroll in a registered apprenticeship program; Join the armed services; Get a part-time job; Get a full-time job; Start a family; Travel; Do volunteer or missionary work; Other; Not sure what you want to do”

“How sure are you that you will pursue further education after you leave high school?”; “Very sure you’ll go; You’ll probably go; You probably won’t go; Very sure you won’t go”

“As things stand now, what is the job or occupation that you expect or plan to have at age 30?” [open-ended response]

4) *Factors affecting wages.* HSLs will collect information on what student and parent respondents expect wages will be, given different education levels.

“How much money do you think you would earn in a year of working if you had the following levels of education? (Please provide your best guess.)” “If you left high school without finishing, you’d make \$| in a year.; If you finish high school with a GED or alternative high school credential, you’d make \$| in a year.; If you finish high school with a regular diploma, you’d make \$| in a year.; If you finish college, you’d make \$| in a year.”

With regards to the portion of the comment referring specifically to the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B), the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) acts as the base year for two NCES longitudinal postsecondary data collections—the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) and the B&B. NPSAS is conducted every four years, with alternating administrations acting as the base years for BPS and B&B. So new B&B cohorts are begun every eight years. Having more frequent cohorts of B&B respondents would improve the analytic value and representativeness of the data, however this would require additional resources that are currently unavailable. NCES has recently begun exploring many options in order to address these shared concerns, including the possibilities for expanding to new data collection approaches that might one day allow for more frequent cohorts. Please note that a Federal Register notice for a 60-day public comment period for B&B:08/12 Field Test 2011 was published on February 11, 2011 and the description of this upcoming study is currently available at <http://edicsweb.ed.gov/>.

### **Data Accessibility**

*Any data collected should be made publicly available in a consistent and timely manner, and be as transparent as possible considering students' privacy requirements. Additionally, the data should be presented in an accessible format, such as SAS, SPSS, or Microsoft Excel.*

*The field test presents a tremendous opportunity to track and learn more about students' decision-making, and AAUW urges the Department to make this data collection as comprehensive and accessible as possible. The results of this study will allow policy-makers and educators to understand these challenges and act accordingly to better serve the interests of students.*

In response to your comment about data accessibility, we will make every effort to provide informative data for public use, again holding protection of survey respondents' personal information most important. More detailed data will be available for analysis through a restricted-use license. We aim for release of reliable, high quality data within twelve months of completion of data collection, and sooner if possible.