

February 15, 2011

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Shelly Martinez, OMB  
**From:** Laura LoGerfo, NCES & Elise Christopher, NCES  
**Through:** Kashka Kubzdela, NCES  
**Re:** Response to OMB Passback on Proposed Student Questionnaire for HSLs:09  
Field Test (OMB# 1850-0852)

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Our only question about HSLs is related to the student questionnaire. We are concerned that it is estimated to take 35 minutes, 5 minutes longer than the base year questionnaire. Can NCES provide:

1. A crosswalk (doesn't have to be at individual question level) between the two years questions?
2. A justification for new content and repeated content that ends up lengthening the survey?

The HSLs:09 field team understands OMB's concerns about lengthening the amount of time for completion of the student questionnaire. The original base year field test OMB clearance package estimated the length of the student survey to be 30 minutes, which was revised in the full scale clearance request for the base year collection to 35 minutes for students (Table 2 on page 30 of the Supporting Statement Part A). In the base year it typically took students a little over 31 minutes to complete the questionnaire, and this year we estimate that it will take closer to 35 minutes. The small additional time will not disrupt students' school day any more than in the base year, is not expected to compromise response rates, but is expected to significantly increase the policy relevance of HSLs data and improve data quality.

HSLs:09's First Follow-up is the first survey of a nationally representative sample of 11th graders. This provides a critical opportunity to ask questions that directly address the President's agenda – i.e., enhancing college preparation in high school, expanding college access, and helping potential students secure financial aid for postsecondary education. Previous studies have surveyed students in their 12<sup>th</sup> grade year, which is too late to capture these policy relevant constructs. What we measure in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade can inform plans to expand college entry at all levels (e.g., 2-year institutions, 4-year institutions, career and vocational programs, etc.) for all students. Further, HSLs:09 provides a sufficient sample to facilitate understanding college-going behaviors, with a special emphasis on college preparation and access, of disadvantaged and underrepresented students.

The First Follow-up questionnaire is longer than the Base Year questionnaire because important items were added to address these policy-relevant data requirements, such as:

- influences of friends on drop-out and college preparation behaviors

- influences on course-taking, college, and career goals
- students' reasons for dropping out from/returning to school (if they reported ever dropping out of school)
- students' expectations of graduating from high school
- students' intended majors and/or career fields
- students' and families' financial preparations for college
- information on parents' education and occupation

This last group of questions, on parents' education and occupation, were added to ensure adequate data for cases without parental response on the First Follow-up. Parental response was found to be lower than expected for the Base Year survey.

Please see the attached crosswalk for a specific list of questions that were added or revised in the First Follow-up questionnaire. The crosswalk does not reflect base year questions about 8th grade that were deleted for first follow up students who already answered them in the base year.

We do not expect students to be pulled from class for any additional time, as the requested time block is the same length of time as we requested in the base year and is sufficient to encompass a 35 minute questionnaire (student time block is 90 minutes, consisting of 35 minutes for the survey, 40 minutes for the assessment, and the remaining 15 minutes for "administrative" time). Furthermore, and most importantly, we do not expect the relatively small incremental increase in time burden to significantly affect response rates for the survey as a whole or for specific items.