

CONTACT

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Applicant: Kerry Gruber
Title: Project Director
Schools and Staffing Survey

Affiliation: United States Department of Education
National Center for Education Statistics

Address: 1990 K Street NW, Suite 9018
Washington, DC 20006

Phone: (202) 502-7349
Fax: (202) 502-7475
E-mail: kerry.gruber@ed.gov

TITLE

Schools and Staffing Survey, 2011-12

PURPOSE

The need for comprehensive data on teachers, school administrators, and school policies and programs has been well established. In response to concerns about the status of teaching and education, state and local education policymakers have sought more information about the school environment, the composition of the school workforce, and policies affecting the recruitment, retention, and retirement of teachers. The Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) seeks to fulfill this need. Conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) on behalf of the United States Department of Education, SASS collects in-depth data on public and private elementary and secondary schools in the United States.

Conducted once every 4 years, SASS is a large-scale, extensive survey of K-12 school districts, schools, teachers, principals, and school libraries across the entire nation. SASS does not, however, collect data from students or conduct any form of student assessment. The data from SASS are used by a wide variety of people interested in K–12 education, including teacher professional organizations, private school associations, education advocacy groups, legislators, researchers, and journalists. For example, the American Federation of Teachers, Council of Chief State School Officers, and the National Education Association endorse the collection of SASS data (a complete listing of organizations endorsing the survey can be found on the front of the questionnaires). SASS provides data on the characteristics and qualifications of teachers and principals, teacher hiring practices, professional development, class size, and other conditions in schools across the nation.

By linking data provided by schools with their respective principals, teachers, libraries, and districts, SASS provides a unique resource for information on elementary and secondary education. Data can be analyzed not only within each component (i.e., the district, school, principal, teacher, and library media center data files), but also across components or data files. This linkage across the different respondent groups makes SASS data unique among school surveys and allows researchers to study the complexities of the American education system from multiple perspectives. For example, researchers can study teacher attrition using information from not only teachers but also from their schools and principals. The integrated survey design also allows NCES to collect

information from the school personnel who can best supply it, causing less inconvenience to respondents and resulting in more accurate information.

Since its inception in 1987, the Schools and Staffing Survey has had four core components: the School District Questionnaire, School Questionnaire, Principal Questionnaire, and Teacher Questionnaire. In the 1999-2000 administration of SASS, the Library Media Center Questionnaire was added. In the 2011-12 school year, these questionnaires will be sent to respondents in public, public charter, and private schools.

In order to collect data on teacher career paths, a one-year follow-up is conducted the year after SASS on a small subset of the teachers interviewed in SASS. The Teacher Follow-up Survey will be fielded in 2012-13, with the first stage consisting of a brief teaching status update from the SASS schools about the previous year's sampled teachers. The smaller subset of teachers to be followed up are then sent a questionnaire about comparisons between the current year (whether teaching or not) and last year. Interviewed teachers in SASS are informed that there may be a follow-up. Similarly, research and policy interest in the turnover of principals led to a Principal Follow-up Survey, which consists of the principal status update from the school the year after SASS, but without the follow-up questionnaire. The Principal Follow-up Survey is collected during the second half of the 2012-13 school year for all schools sampled in SASS and consists of one occupational status question.

HYPOTHESES

The White House, the U.S. Department of Education, other Federal agencies, Congress, State Departments of Education, education associations, and the education research community will use data from the 2011-12 SASS to answer questions about a variety of issues. In the past, some of the most frequently published topics have included data on class size, new hires, new teacher characteristics, teacher qualifications, out-of-field teaching, professional development, and teacher attrition or retention. NCES is authorized by law to collect data "on the condition of education" in the United States, and publishes mostly descriptive statistics. Based on previous administrations of SASS, the data will be used to:

- Assess teacher capacity as defined by teacher qualifications, teacher career paths, professional development activities, and support for these aspects of teachers' careers by the school and the district;
- Assess school capacity as defined by school organization and decision-making, management of curriculum and instruction, school programs, and school safety;
- Assess district capacity as defined by policies regarding the recruitment, retention, and retirement of teachers; and
- Report national statistics on school libraries, which the Federal government has been doing since 1958, to provide a national picture of school library media center staffing, collections, expenditures, technology, and services.

MEASUREMENT

Each topic is briefly described below in terms of the broad education issues in need of measurement.

TEACHER QUALITY, EVALUATION, AND CAREER PATHS

Teacher quality and the factors that influence it have become the focus of many educational researchers and the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Teacher quality items help inform NCEES about the characteristics of training, which can be related to teaching assignments. Quality is defined as the match between teacher preparation (major, degree level, certification) and teaching assignment fields. Similarly, formal evaluations of teachers are tied to teacher quality. Consequently, the steps involved in the teacher evaluation process are of increasing interest in the education field in an effort to facilitate the ability of principals and others to assess the teacher's success in the classroom. The movement of teachers in and out of the teaching workforce has been a central concern of SASS since 1987, when a method for capturing these movements directly from teachers was first devised. Building upon this base, more detailed indicators of teachers' career paths may help explain entry into teaching and teacher attrition. Teachers' experiences during the recruitment process and their first year of teaching can greatly influence decisions to continue teaching. These topics are measured in SASS.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND COMPENSATION

Recruiting and compensation practices for teachers have been a long-standing topic of interest as schools and districts investigate ways to recruit and retain high-quality teachers through incentives and various compensation methods. The School District Questionnaire has questions about compensation practices, pay ranges, and incentives. Related questions on the School Questionnaire also explore teacher vacancies and the ease with which positions are filled.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In recent years, policymakers, educators, and researchers have recognized that current reform efforts may require changes in teachers' knowledge and their working relationships with students. Teachers are being called upon to provide the nation's children with a standardized level of education, to use new technologies, and to change how they interact with students and each other. As a result, professional development aimed at improving teaching quality is a key component of all reform efforts.

SCHOOL REFORM

An important role of SASS is to document the evolution of major national reforms, especially as they affect schools and teaching practices. In response to the use of accountability measures in the No Child Left Behind Act, items are included on the District and Principal questionnaires about Adequate Yearly Progress for the district and the school, respectively. Other topics continued from the 2007-08 SASS questionnaires are the amount of influence principals have in setting school policies.

SCHOOL SAFETY

School safety is frequently reported as a major problem in public schools in the United States. Violence and drug abuse in schools put huge constraints on teachers, students, administrators, and schools. Increased attention to school safety has led policymakers to begin examining school safety at the national level. The school safety items include the principal's knowledge of violence and other school problems and school security policies and how they are implemented.

BASIC DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Each of the SASS surveys contains questions that provide basic descriptive information on the respondent:

- The principal and teacher questionnaires include items on gender, age, and racial and ethnic identity;
- The principal questionnaire includes items on licensure, highest degree earned, years of teaching experience, years of experience as a principal, and salary;
- The teacher questionnaire contains items on years of teaching experience, education degrees and fields, certification, salary, and main teaching assignment;
- The school questionnaire contains items on enrollment, the type of school, programs and services in the school, and counts of various types of school staff; and
- The district questionnaire contains items on numbers of newly-hired teachers and principals, counts of full-time equivalent teachers and student enrollment, and salary schedules for teachers.

LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER

The Library Media Center questionnaire is administered to public schools that report having a library media center. The survey's sections delve into questions about the library's facilities and policies, staffing, technology, collections, and expenditures. Facilities and policy questions include usage policies and the physical facilities available to students, faculty, and community members. The staffing section asks about paid and unpaid staff, and the technology section includes questions about the number of computer workstations and Internet access. Lastly, information is gathered on the library's holdings, acquisitions, and expenditures.

CONTENT DESIGN

In this administration, SASS will retain or expand many of the topics covered in previous administrations, maintaining the capability for trend analysis. At the same time, new items developed for the 2011-12 administration of SASS will collect additional information on a number of topics crucial to education reform. Since the 2007-08 SASS collection, NCES reviewed and revised the content and emphasis of SASS. The revision process involved an analysis of items on the nine SASS surveys. Items that had low response rates, consistently confusing responses, and other grammatical or clarity issues were highlighted and discussed at length. Several items were redesigned, reformatted, or moved to ensure item precision. Before the surveys were finalized, sections of some of the surveys underwent cognitive lab testing.

The same five core components of the 2007-08 SASS remain: the District Questionnaire, School Questionnaire, Principal Questionnaire, Teacher Questionnaire, and Library Media Center Questionnaire. These surveys are linked so that researchers may analyze school-level and district effects.

QUESTIONNAIRES

Although the questionnaires are still in the process of being professionally formatted for final production, the exact set of questions to be asked in the 2011-12 administration of SASS are enclosed in a more rudimentary format. The 2007-08 SASS questionnaires as well as those from earlier administrations are available on the SASS website:

<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/SASS/questionnaire.asp>.

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING

The U.S. Census Bureau handles the collection of SASS data for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). SASS is a self-administered survey that is mailed to sampled participants. The survey does not require the use of any school personnel to administer it, other than the direct time it takes for the sampled person to fill out the form. It also does not involve students or classroom time. Sampled principals, teachers, and the most appropriate school or district staff record their answers onto the printed questionnaire and return the questionnaire as directed (usually by prepaid mail). A U.S. Census Bureau representative will contact the school prior to mailing the questionnaires, to ask for the name and title of a contact. Schools will be asked to have one person designated as a school-wide coordinator.

Participants for SASS are chosen by a scientific, random sample selection. First, sampling begins by selecting a small proportion of schools which represent primary, middle, and high school levels and geographic areas of each state, and then surveying the related school districts, principals, and library media centers. Public schools and related districts selected for SASS are sampled from the Common Core of Data (CCD), the state-reported listing of all public schools. The U.S. Department of Education collects data for CCD annually from all state education agencies. NCES does modify slightly the list of schools from the CCD to meet the definition of a school as used by SASS. The main design objective is to provide the following data for public schools:

- State estimates for the number of primary, middle, and high schools;
- National estimates of combined grade public schools (schools with a grade span encompassing primary and middle or high school levels);
- National and regional estimates of public schools by various geographic (e.g., locale) and school characteristics; and
- National and regional estimates of public charter schools and selected school characteristics.

For all public schools, the principal, library media center, and the school district will be automatically included in the survey as a result of the school being selected. Teachers are also surveyed within selected schools, but only a few are selected based on a random assignment designed to form a representative sample at the state level.

The sample of teachers will be selected from a list of teachers working in the sampled schools. The list(s) will be provided by the district or school, using the Teacher Listing Form, or by electronically uploading the information onto a secure server. In each school sampled, all teachers who teach students in any of grades K-12 during the fall of 2011 are eligible. At least one, but never more than 20 teachers are sampled from the school, depending on the size of the school. On average, about 5 to 8 teachers are sampled from each school (even fewer in small schools). In order to achieve the desired sample size of new teachers, as well as teachers nearing retirement, the teacher sample will be stratified into four teacher groups. This stratification will ensure a sufficient number of teachers in each group to permit estimates at the national level. Within each selected school, teachers will be classified as belonging in one of the following four categories:

1. First year (in first year of teaching);
2. Early-career (2 to 3 years completed in teaching);
3. Mid-career (4 to 19 years completed in teaching); or
4. Late-career (20 or more years completed in teaching).

All late-career teachers, who are more numerous than either the first-year, early-career, or mid-career groups, will be sampled with equal probability and at a lower rate than those in the other three groups.

Across the 50 states and the District of Columbia, the 2011-12 SASS sample will include approximately 5,000 districts, 13,000 schools and school principals (including 10,000 public schools), and 60,000 teachers (including 50,000 public school teachers). The library media center sample will consist of approximately 10,000 public school library media centers.

DATA COLLECTION

The U.S. Census Bureau handles the data collection and the editing and cleaning of the data. The 2011-12 SASS is a mail-based survey, with an Internet response option for teachers. Follow-up for sampled schools, districts, and individuals who do not respond to the initial mailing will be contacted by telephone and in some cases, by personal visit. U.S. Census Bureau staff who contact potential respondents for SASS receive training in preparation for the survey.

Districts will be contacted by telephone over the summer prior to school year 2011-12 and before the questionnaire mailings, to ask whether the district can supply the Teacher List Form electronically and to verify district and school contact information. These operations are necessary to ensure efficient survey data collection. Schools’ principals will be contacted by phone beginning in August 2011 to confirm the school’s mailing address, verify the school’s eligibility for the survey, assign a school coordinator to assist in follow-up, and encourage them to use a web-based survey response center. This easy-to-use and efficient interactive web-based response center will allow U.S. Census Bureau staff to track the status of each questionnaire, correct contact information, and allow for contacts by e-mail to assist with follow-up efforts. Schools will then be mailed the set of questionnaires with prepaid return envelopes. U.S. Census Bureau staff will follow-up on remaining questionnaires associated with the schools first through the coordinator and then with each respondent by telephone and by personal interview, as appropriate, from October 2011 through April 2012.

Questionnaires will be mailed to school districts in August 2011. Telephone follow-up will begin with nonresponding districts in October 2011. Field staff will conduct personal visits to follow-up on the remaining nonresponding districts beginning in January 2012.

The data collection schedule is outlined below:

2011-12 SASS Timetable	
Call districts to ask about Teacher List, principal e-mail contacts	May 2011
Mail initial letter to schools to inform about SASS	June 2011
Send initial e-mail to school principals	August 2011
Mail District Questionnaire and Teacher Listing Form (TLF) to school districts	August 2011
Mail School, Library, Principal Questionnaires and TLF (if applicable) to schools	August 2011
Screen schools and establish school coordinator	August – September 2011
Telephone follow-up on Teacher Listing Form (TLF)	September - October 2011
Telephone follow-up with District	September 2011

Telephone follow-up with School (Screener and reminder ops)	September – November 2011
Mail District reminder letter (for questionnaire and TLF)	September 2011
Second mail-out of School, Library, and Principal Questionnaires	September 2011
Telephone follow-up on District Questionnaire	October – November 2011
Mail Teacher Questionnaires weekly as teachers are sampled	October 2011 - April 2012
Second mail-out of District Questionnaires	October 2011
Telephone reminders to return questionnaires	October - November 2011
Begin TLF follow-up with schools from nonresponding districts	October 2011
Reminder letter to schools for outstanding questionnaires	October 2011
Telephone nonresponse follow-up	November - December 2011
Mail second District reminder letter	December 2011
Field follow-up with District	January - February 2012
Field follow-up with Schools	January - April 2012
Mail Teacher reminder packages	April 2012
Data capture of all questionnaires	November 2011 – May 2012
Data processing	February 2012 – December 2012
Completion of files, tabulations, and codebooks	January 2013
Publication of SASS <i>First Look</i> release reports	May 2013

RESPONSE BURDEN

SASS relies on the voluntary participation of the school district, principal, teacher, and library personnel. The quality of national and state estimates is limited by the level of respondent participation. Every effort is made to create questionnaires that collect in-depth data without putting an undue burden on the respondent. The estimated average response time for each public school sector questionnaire in the 2011-12 SASS is presented in the table below. The average length of time necessary to complete each type of questionnaire is estimated from the results of the 2007-08 SASS.

Table 1. Number of survey item codes and average response time per respondent for each public school sector questionnaire in the 2011-12 SASS

Questionnaire	Number of item codes	Estimated average response time per respondent
Teacher Listing Form	N/A	30 minutes
School District	181	50 minutes
School	197	50 minutes
School with District Items (for single-school districts and charter schools)	220	60 minutes
Principal	193	30 minutes
Teacher	440	55 minutes
School Library Media Center	53	30 minutes

The Schools and Staffing Survey does not require any form of student or parent participation. Teachers and principals will receive a letter before the mailed questionnaire, which explains that

participation in the survey is voluntary. In addition, each questionnaire states on the inside cover, “We hope you participate in this voluntary survey.”

SASS has achieved a high response rate in previous administrations. Weighted response rates for public schools in the 2007-08 SASS are presented in the table below.

Table 2. Sample size and weighted response rate for each survey population for the 2007-08 SASS

Survey population	Sample size	Weighted response rate (%)
School District	5,250	87.8
Public School Principal	9,800	79.4
Public School	9,800	80.4
Public School Teacher	47,440	84.0
Public School Library Media Center	9,800	81.7

ANALYSIS

Once the U.S. Census Bureau receives the completed survey forms, staff enter responses from the surveys into electronic data files, which are checked against the survey forms for accuracy. Names, addresses, and other identifying information for schools, principals, teachers, library staff, and districts are removed from the files to protect respondents’ confidentiality. When the respondents’ identifying information is removed from the data files, a school identification number is used to connect principal and teacher data to data from the schools in which they work.

The data are used in statistical summaries only. NCES issues its own reports and allows researchers to access the data through restricted-use licensing for other analyses. Only users who have official clearance from NCES may have access to the restricted-use data files.

Several reports are issued once the data are finalized. These reports may include: a general report that provides an overview of the data, a teacher report, a school report, and a report on state-level findings, among others. Congress and the U.S. Department of Education use these data to critically examine existing educational programs and services and to plan new programs intended to improve education throughout the nation.

Summary results from the SASS data are in the public domain and will be made available on our website (<http://nces.ed.gov/survey/sass>) after all the data have been fully processed and tabulated.

CONSENT

The nature of this self-administered, cross-sectional survey is not considered intrusive, and has been ruled to be exempt under the protection of human subjects’ provisions in federal research. There is no student data, student test score data, nor sensitive information (such as Social Security numbers) associated with any of the staff data acquired in this data collection. On each questionnaire for each respondent, there is a statement that participation is voluntary, implying that active consent is not necessary. For more information, please see <http://www.ed.gov/policy/fund/reg/humansub/part97-2.html#97.103>.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Census Bureau shall comply with ED's IT security policy requirements as set forth in the Handbook for Information Assurance Security Policy and related procedures and guidance. The Census Bureau shall comply with IT security requirements in the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA), Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) standards and guidance.

These requirements include the successful certification and accreditation of the system before it can be implemented. To ensure the system can be certified and accredited, security controls shall be designed and implemented in the system consistent with the NIST 800-53 - Recommended Security Controls for Federal Information Systems identified for the impact level of the system. The Census Bureau will determine the system impact level using NIST FIPS 199 "Standards for Security Categorization of Federal Information and Information Systems" and with subsequent details from NIST 800-60 "Guide for Mapping Types of Information and Information Systems to Security Categories (Volumes 1 and 2). The results of that determination will be shared with ED.

Appropriate memoranda of understanding and interconnection security agreements will be documented as part of the certification and accreditation process.

From the initial contact with the participants in this survey through all of the follow-up efforts, careful attention will be paid to informing potential survey respondents that personally identifiable characteristics may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose, except as required by law [*Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002)* Public Law 107-279, Section 183].

A violation of any of these restrictions is a felony, punishable by imprisonment of up to 5 years and a fine of up to \$250,000.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of the Schools and Staffing Survey is to provide valuable information to teachers and school administrators about the policies and changes of the nation's schools. With the help of survey participants, the National Center for Education Statistics is able to produce state estimates of public school characteristics and facilitate comparisons among elementary and secondary schools at the state and national levels and among combined schools at the national level. The ability of NCES to provide this beneficial service is contingent upon the voluntary participation of schools, principals, and teachers, whose inclusion is dependent upon their districts' approval. The Schools and Staffing Survey provides respondents with the opportunity to participate in a unique national survey and contribute to data that are used by researchers interested in improving the education system in the United States.

[Name of School District] benefits from being a sampled district by representing itself and also the state of [Name of State]. Consequently, your district's participation will improve the reliability of state and national estimates, which will result in higher quality data. By choosing to participate, the policies and characteristics of the [Name of School District] will be reflected in the 2011-12 SASS, which will allow your schools to compare themselves to other schools

within the [Name of State] and across the nation. The important information provided by your district will better inform and shape future education policies.