

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau
Annual Survey of School System Finances
OMB Control Number 0607-0700

Part B – Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

1. Universe and Respondent Selection

The universe consists of approximately 15,345 school systems (as counted for the 2009-2010 survey cycle in a June 2011 listing of school systems in the Governments Integrated Directory) and is distributed as follows:

Independent School Districts	12,654
Dependent Educational Service Agencies (ESAs)	1,497
Dependent School Systems (not ESAs)	1,194

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 for the 16th consecutive year and expects this to continue for the foreseeable future. The full universe (15,345 for 2009-2010 survey cycle) of school systems are included in the annual survey.

Due to the use of central collection from state education agencies, the approximate response rate for the 2009-2010 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-reporting guide for respondents rather than as a data collection instrument. The Census Bureau relies heavily on collecting this public school system finance data centrally at the state education agency. 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, 22 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 education format to the Census F-33 format. Twenty-seven states reformat state-specific data files into the Census Bureau’s format prior to submitting the data electronically to the Census Bureau while two states provide a combination of the files. A copy of the Form F-33 for 2010 is shown in Attachment A.

Form F-33 Survey Announcement. This letter is mailed electronically 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 letter to plan for the processing of state education agency data submissions. A copy of the F-33 Survey Announcement is shown in Attachment A.

Form F-33-L1. This form is a supplemental collection currently sent to the school systems in four states for the 2009-2010 survey cycle: Delaware, Florida, Nevada, and Rhode Island. In these states the education agencies collect adequate detail in all aspects of school finance except for assets. The asset data provided on this form is merged with the other data collected from the state education agencies. A copy of the F-33-L1 form for 2010 is shown in Attachment A.

Form F-33-L2. This form is a supplemental collection currently sent to the school systems in eight states for the 2009-2010 survey cycle: Connecticut, Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio, and Virginia. In these states the education agencies collect adequate detail in all aspects of school finance except for indebtedness. The debt data provided by respondents on this form is merged with the other data collected from the state education agencies. A copy of the F-33-L2 form for 2010 is shown in Attachment A.

Form F-33-L3. This form is a supplemental collection currently sent to the school systems in five states for the 2009-2010 survey cycle: Arizona, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Vermont. In these states the education agencies collect adequate detail in all aspects of school finance except for assets and indebtedness information. This form combines the items requested on the forms F-33-L1 and F-33-L2. The asset and debt data provided by respondents is merged with the other data collected from the state education agencies. A copy of the F-33-L3 form for 2010 is shown in Attachment A.

All school districts are canvassed in the survey. As such, there is no sampling error for the school district estimates. 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, editing and imputation procedures are used.

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 nonresponse. Fiscal data are also used when determining Title I and Impact Aid federal grant allocations.

The Census Bureau uses traditional mail canvass techniques to enhance response for the forms it sends to school systems to obtain debt and asset information. Conducting follow-up mailings to nonrespondents, initiating central data collection techniques, soliciting audit reports in lieu of completed questionnaires, and an Internet collection for debt and asset data are several methods the Census Bureau uses to maximize response.

The Annual Survey of School System Finances has unit and item response rate goals of 85 percent, which meet the response rate thresholds specified in OMB, Census Bureau, and NCES Quality Standards.

The Annual Survey of School System Finances has always fallen well above these response rate goals due to long-standing central collection agreements with each state and the District of Columbia. State education agencies generally require school districts to submit complete financial data to them. The survey has received a file from every state respondent every year, which ensures a high response rate.

4. Test of Procedures or Methods

The Census Bureau has not recently conducted procedural tests for the Annual Survey of School System Finances. 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, Assistant Division Chief, Statistical Research and Methodology, Governments Division, (301) 763-4882

Data Collection questions to:

Jeremy Phillips, Survey Statistician, Educational Finance and Special Statistics Branch, Governments Division, (301) 763-5653

Attachments to the Supporting Statement:

Attachment A: Forms for 2011 F-33, F-33 Survey Announcement, F-33-L1, F-33-L2, and F-33-L3

Attachment B: Supporting letter for continued data collection from the Bureau of Economic Analysis

Attachment C: List of Consultations