

NATIONAL TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL SURVEY (NTPS)
2014-15 PILOT TEST
SPECIAL DISTRICT APPROVAL

VOLUME I

OMB# 1850-0803 v.101

April 2014

National Center For Education Statistics (NCES)

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A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Making Collection of Information Necessary

This material is being submitted under the generic National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) clearance agreement (OMB #1850-0803), which provides for NCES to conduct various procedures (such as field tests and cognitive interviews) to test new methodologies, question types, or delivery methods to improve data collection instruments and procedures. This request is to conduct a pilot test of the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), which NCES is developing in a redesign effort of the NCES Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). In 2013, then NCES Commissioner Jack Buckley laid out a vision for NTPS (a redesign of SASS) that would be:

- Highly flexible,
- Timely,
- Administered and providing new data every two years instead of every 4 years,
- Utilizing core surveys of teachers and principals, and rotating modules to provide the Department of Education (ED) and researchers with trend data on key topics, as well as the ability to quickly collect information on hot topics,
- Designed from the ground up to allow for quick turnaround of datasets and reports with release of data within 12 months of end of data collection,
- Integrated with other ED data, and
- Potentially linked with other collections such as ED Facts and CRDC, or maintain variables that allow researchers to make these links.

NCES, the Census Bureau, and NORC have been working to develop a design that meets these objectives, while maintaining SASS's longstanding role as the primary source of data on the teacher and principal labor market as well as on what is happening in K-12 schools from the perspective of school staff. By utilizing core content that does not change between two year rounds and rotating modules that allow deeper investigation of key topics, the NTPS will cover a similar breadth of topics as SASS but in more depth across two study administrations. Some of the key design changes from the 2011-12 SASS include:

- Nationally representative estimates,
- Data collection every two years, and
- Reduced overall burden on schools and districts through fewer data collection forms.

Due to the low response rates achieved on the 2011-12 Private School SASS and currently being experienced on the 2013-14 Private School Survey (PSS), NCES has decided to postpone the collection of private school data and will utilize the 2015-16 PSS to test approaches to enhance response rates among the private schools.

Justification for the 2014-15 NTPS Pilot Test

In general, the 2011-12 SASS achieved lower response rates than previous collections, especially on the Teacher Listing Form (TLF) and Teacher Questionnaire (TQ). While no single cause for the decline has been identified, a number of changes were introduced in 2011-12 collection to mode and timing. For example, initial attempts were made to collect the lists of teachers (TLF data) electronically from districts. This was unsuccessful and staff had to revert to collection from schools, delaying the TLF operation. Teachers were sent instructions to access an Internet TQ in 2011 as opposed to being sent a paper TQ as had been done in all prior rounds of SASS. Since these changes were made without utilizing a control group, it is not possible to determine what contribution, if any, they made to the response rates issues experienced.

To improve operations and response rates, a number of new data collection approaches have been proposed for the 2015-16 NTPS collection, which are outlined elsewhere in the document. The purpose of this pilot test is to optimize the design of the 2015-16 NTPS by experimentally testing the impact of offering Internet versions of the School, Principal, and Teacher Questionnaires first; looking at the impact of collecting teacher email address as part of the TLF operation, looking at optimal methods of inviting Teachers to the internet questionnaire, and improving questionnaire wording and instructions in the Internet survey. This package provides information about the planned new approach and presents an overview of the proposed NTPS design.

The basic components and key design features of the full-scale NTPS will respond to the need for comparative data on teachers, school administrators, and school policies and programs to fulfill the ongoing requirement for NCES to meet its legislative mandate to report on the “condition of education in the United States.” In response to numerous data requests about the status of teaching and education, state and local educational policymakers have sought more information about the composition of the school workforce and policies affecting the recruitment, retention, and retirement of teachers. The full implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act* has added scrutiny of principals as school leaders and of the hiring process for principals.

Legislative Authorization

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), U.S. Department of Education, is conducting this study, as authorized under 20 U.S. Code §9543 of the *Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA)*.

Prior and Related Studies

The studies prior to the Schools and Staffing Survey were separate surveys of public and private schools, principals, teachers, and school districts under the Elementary and Secondary General Information System. The National Research Council report, “Creating a Center for Education Statistics: A Time for Action,” in 1986, noted:

“It is essential that any system of collecting education data recognize, reflect and react to the issue of timeliness (...) An example of such a lack is the case of teaching and teachers. With the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), these topics emerged as fundamental issues of concern, and the need for data was sudden and immediate. Unfortunately, information on the number of teachers and other professional staff – which we would think would be an essential element of any continuing data system – was last collected at the elementary and secondary level in 1979-80. Data on minority teachers is even more archaic, having last been collected in 1968.”

This report caused a number of fundamental changes to occur at the National Center for Education Statistics (formerly, the Center for Education Statistics). Among them was the establishment of the Schools and Staffing Survey, to collect data on a periodic basis about schools, principals, teachers, districts, and school libraries, all in the same survey year. The survey was designed to provide the data at the state level for public schools and at the “affiliation” level for private schools.

The General Education Provisions Act, as amended [20 U.S.C. §1211(e)(1)], specified that the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) design an integrated survey system called the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). Legislative authority for NCES to collect data through surveys was reauthorized under the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 and has most recently been authorized by the provisions of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 cited above. SASS was first fielded in school year 1987-88, collected every 3 years through 1993-94, and then underwent a 6-year pause for major survey design revisions, which resulted in the 1999-2000 data collection. Since then, SASS has been on a 4-year data collection cycle, with each SASS data collection followed one year later with the Teacher Follow-up Survey data collection. The most recent administration was in 2011-12. At the conclusion of the 2011-12 collection, NCES began a redesign of SASS to be called the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS). The new name reflects the studies narrowed focus on the teacher and principal labor market and state of k-12 school from the perspective of school staff.

2. Purposes and Uses of NTPS

In the past, some of the most heavily published analyses based on SASS have included average class size, the number of new teachers, out-of-field teaching, professional development, teacher attrition and retention, and teacher qualifications. NCES plans to keep items on these topics in NTPS. Based on previous administrations of SASS, the NTPS data will be used to develop nationally representative statistics on:

- A. Teacher qualifications, teacher career paths, professional development needs and activities, and support for these aspects of teachers' careers by the school and the district;
- B. School organization and decision-making, management of curriculum and instruction, school safety, and parental involvement; and
- C. Policies over the recruitment and retention of teachers and principals.

3. Appropriate Use of Information Technology

Incorporating and optimizing Internet data collection is the primary focus of the NTPS pilot test. We are proposing five experiments to look at how to best utilize Internet data collection in the NTPS design:

- A split panel design to test collecting teacher lists from schools in an electronic format;
- A split panel design to test the impact of contacting sampled teachers by email as well as by mail;
- A split panel design to test an Internet response mode for the Principal Questionnaire;
- A split panel design to test an Internet response mode for the School Questionnaire; and
- A split panel test looking at optimal placement of instructions and examples on a web based form.

A key feature of the NTPS Pilot Test is to determine whether schools are willing and able to provide teacher email addresses on the Teacher Listing Form and, if so, the effect contacting of teachers by email has on the Teacher Questionnaire response rate. Another experiment will be implemented to test whether schools are willing and able to provide their teacher list electronically. Gathering at least some teacher lists electronically helps speed up the sample selection of teachers and reduces costs for processing such data.

A split panel design will be implemented to test whether school staff and principals are more likely to respond to an Internet response option than the traditional paper questionnaires. The Internet response option reduces processing costs and editing errors.

A final experiment will look at varying the placement and wording of instructions on a reduced version of the teacher Internet instrument. This instrument will be developed and managed separately from the main pilot test and hosted on ED/NCES servers. More details on these planned experiments will be provided in the subsequent request to conduct the pilot test.

The following information technology used in past SASS collections will be continued in the 2014-15 NTPS Pilot Test:

- Web-based case management system for tracking questionnaires within a school;
- Potential respondents can query project staff with their questions via email and by telephone; and
- The data from the paper questionnaires will be scanned optically with keying only of write-in entries.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

A key element of the NTPS design principle was to leverage trusted data sources instead of asking schools or districts to report items on NTPS that they or their state have already provided through other collections. At the start of the SASS redesign, all SASS items were crosswalked against a variety of department and external data sources. From this review, a number of duplicate or near duplicate items were identified. As a result, NCES plans to append data from the Common Core Data (CCD), Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), and other sources to the NTPS files in order to enrich and not duplicate data collection on these topics. In some cases a duplicate item was kept on NTPS because the extant variable was not suitable for NTPS (e.g. due to an issue with periodicity, availability, item wording, reliability, or the item is needed for confirmation purposes).

5. Methods Used to Minimize Burden on Small Entities

The burden on small schools is minimized during the NTPS through the sample design that specifies the selection of schools as a function of size as defined by the number of teachers. Small schools and districts, therefore, will be sampled at lower rates because they comprise a smaller proportion of the teacher population per school. Additionally, a large component of this redesign is to improve the data collected and minimize the burden imposed on respondents.

6. Frequency of Data Collection

This is a one time pilot study of the NTPS design and collection features. A full scale data collection is planned for 2015-16 and full clearance will be requested under a separate submission for that collection.

7. Special Circumstances of Data Collection

There are no circumstances that will require special data collection efforts.

8. Consultants outside the Agency

Since its inception, the development of SASS has relied on the substantive and technical review and comment of people both inside and outside the Department of Education. Outside experts who were convened to offer comments on proposed revisions for the NTPS include:

Dale Ballou
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, TN

Mark Berends
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, IN

Rolf Blank
Council of Chief State School Officers
Washington, D.C.

Sean Corcoran
New York University
New York, NY

Betheny Gross
Center on Reinventing Public Education
University of Washington
Seattle, WA

Richard Ingersoll
University of Pennsylvania
Graduate School of Education
Philadelphia, PA

Joe McTighe
Council for American Private Education
Germantown, MD

Anna Nicotera
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
Washington, DC

Gary Sykes
Understanding Teaching Quality Research Center
Education Testing Services
Princeton, NJ

The following experts served as part of the SASS team in previous rounds of administration:

Mr. Aref Dajani
Chief, Longitudinal Surveys Branch
Demographic Statistical Methods Division
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Ms. Jill Dever
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Statistics and Epidemiology Unit (RTI-DC)

Mr. Steve Tourkin
Chief, Education Surveys Branch
Demographic Surveys Division
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Washington, DC 20233
(301) 763-3791

The current NTPS design has benefited from consultation with the following experts:

Mr. Stephen Broughman
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Sample Surveys Division, NCES
1990 K Street, NW
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Ms. Kathryn Chandler
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Ms. Teresa Thomas
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(301) 763-3094

9. Provision of payments or Gifts to Respondents

NCES will not provide a cash incentive to survey respondents.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality

The NTPS data collection agent, the Census Bureau, shall comply with ED's IT security requirements as set forth in the Handbook for Information Assurance Security Policy and related procedures and guidance, 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. 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, potential survey respondents will be informed that all of the information they provide may only be used 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) 20 U.S.C., § 9573].

11. Sensitive Questions

The NTPS questionnaires contain several items about salary and benefits. Federal regulations governing the administration of these questions, which fall under the provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974, require (a) clear documentation of the need for such information as it relates to the primary purpose of the study, (b) provisions to respondents which clearly inform them of the voluntary nature of participation in the study, and (c) assurances of confidential treatment of responses.

The collection of data related to salary is central to understanding key policy issues driving this study. The recruitment of new teachers and retention of experienced teachers are related to the salary and benefits offered by a school or school system. Information about salary in relation to teaching experience, educational background, and working conditions is essential to gaining an understanding of factors affecting teacher compensation. Comparisons of teaching conditions across types of schools require information about the salary and benefits packages of the different types of schools.

The advance notification letter to each respondent explains that participation in the survey is voluntary. In addition, each questionnaire states on the inside cover, "We are conducting this survey with only a sample of [schools, principals, teachers,] (whichever respondent applies for the particular questionnaire). Therefore, the unique data you contribute helps to represent your state or area more accurately. We encourage you to participate in this voluntary survey."

The statement regarding the confidentiality of respondents' data are printed in that same inside cover letter on each questionnaire, where it states: "All information you provide may only be used 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) 20 U.S.C., § 9573]."

12. Estimates of Hour Burden for Information Collection

The first phase of respondent contact for the 2014-2015 NTPS Pilot Test begins with seeking approval from "special districts" – the subset of school districts among those pulled into sample that have set up a process to authorize any research conducted in their district's schools. This operation, which primarily relies on previously-collected contact information compiled within NCES (shared among all data collection programs), starts off with adding new information that can be gleaned from online sources first. Calls are then placed to verify the information about where to send the completed required research application forms, and, if necessary, to collect contact information for this process. During the call, inquiry is also made about the amount of time the districts spend reviewing similar research applications. The estimated number of such districts represents those with particularly detailed application forms and lengthy processes for approval.

Due to the limited time prior to the start of data collection for the 2014-2015 NTPS Pilot Test, not all special districts will be contacted. The special districts included in the 2014-2015 NTPS Pilot Test are those that required "generic" research applications and approved the research application submitted during the 2011-12 SASS.

The contacting of these districts will begin upon receiving OMB’s approval, and continue through data collection, tracking the progress of the research applications through the review and approval or disapproval received.

Table 3. Estimates of respondent burden for preliminary field activities for the 2014-2015 NTPS Pilot Test

Activity	Sample Size	Number of Responses	Average Response Time per Respondent (Minutes)	Total Burden Hours
Contacting special districts for research approval	30	30	180	90

Respondents to the preliminary field activities for NTPS will not incur any costs other than of their time to respond. Currently, the mean hourly rate of an education administrator is \$42.68 (Source: BLS Occupational Employment Statistics, <http://data.bls.gov/oes/> datatype: SOC:119030 (Education Administrators); accessed on April 23, 2014). Thus the estimated respondent dollar cost for these preliminary field activities is \$3,841.

13. Estimates of Cost Burden

There are no additional costs to respond beyond the time to respond.

14. Costs to the Federal Government

The cost to the federal government for the NTPS Pilot Test preliminary activities is \$11,000. The Census Bureau estimates were developed by the Census Bureau divisions involved in these activities.

15. Reasons for Changes in Response Burden and Costs

This clearance request covers only the the special districts’ research approval process activities planned for NTPS 2014/15 pilot test. A separate generic clearance request will be submitted in May 2014 to conduct the pilot test data collection activities.

16. Time Schedule for NTPS

We will begin to contact special districts for research approval upon receiving OMB’s clearanc.

The following activities for SASS data collection are tentative and will be submitted to OMB for approval in the next clearance package:

Mail questionnaires/internet invitations to schools, request teacher lists	October, 2014
Mail first reminder letters to schools	October, 2014
Mail second reminder letters to schools	November, 2014
Telephone follow-up with schools to obtain teacher lists	November – December, 2014
Mail second school packages	November, 2014
Mail Teacher Questionnaires as teachers are sampled	October-January, 2014
Data capture of all questionnaires	October 2014 – March 2015
Data processing	October 2014 – March 2015
Analysis of Pilot Test experiments	2015

17. Approval to not Display Expiration Date for OMB Approval

We are not seeking approval to not display the expiration date of OMB approval.

18. Exception to the Certification Statement

No exception to the certification statement is being requested.

B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

The purpose of this package is to request clearance for what are known as “Special Contact Districts.” These are districts that have been in past NCES studies and are known to require completion of a research application before they will allow schools under their jurisdiction to participate in a study. Based on an initial assessment of the pilot test sample frame, we have identified 30 special contact districts that will be in the sample. An overview of pilot test sampling plans are provided below. Full details of the NTPS pilot test sampling plan will be submitted in the subsequent request to conduct the pilot test data collection.

1. Respondent Universe

1.1. Schools

The 2011-12 SASS frame will serve as the frame for this pilot test. The respondent universe for this pilot test consists of 95,750 public schools in the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (DC) that offer instruction in any of grades K-12. To be eligible for inclusion in the sample, schools must provide classroom instruction to students, have one or more teachers to provide instruction, serve students in at least one of grades 1-12 or the ungraded equivalent, must be located in one or more buildings, and must be located in the U.S. and not in the outlying areas or U.S. territories. No Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded schools or private schools will be included in the sampling frame for the pilot test.

1.2. Teachers

Teachers will be randomly sampled within the second design stage from roster information provided by each participating sampled school. Teachers within the sampled school are classified as ineligible for NTPS if they are a short-term substitute teacher, student teacher, a teacher's aide, or do not teach any of grades K-12 or comparable ungraded levels. This information is obtained from the Teacher Questionnaire. Details of the second-stage sample design of teachers are provided in section 2.

2. Statistical Procedures For Collecting Information

2.1. Sampling

The final 2014-15 NTPS pilot test samples will include no more than:

- 17,834 public schools and school principals (the sample size is expected to be lower and is still being determined); and
- An average of 5 public school teachers per a school.

2.2. Survey Weights

Schools, principals, and teachers will be weighted by the inverse of the probability of selection. The final weight contains adjustments for nonresponse and any other sampling or field considerations that arise after the sample has been drawn.

2.3. Response Rates

We expect the response rates of the 2014-15 NTPS Pilot Test to be lower than those of the 2011-12 SASS. The NTPS Pilot Test is designed to identify the most effective initial contact strategy for the 2015-16 NTPS; therefore, it does not include the telephone and personal visit follow-up operations that are a critical component in raising response rates during the full-scale survey. More details on anticipated response rates and strategies will be provided in the subsequent pilot test data collection clearance package.

3. Procedures For Collection Of Information

The data collection methods for the 2014-15 NTPS Pilot Test will be based on those used in the 2011-2012 SASS with modifications to the collection strategy to optimize the design of the 2015-16 NTPS. This includes experimentally testing the impact of offering Internet versions of the Teacher Listing Form; and School, Principal, and Teacher Questionnaires first, requesting teacher email addresses on the Teacher Listing Form, and contacting teachers to complete the Internet Teacher Questionnaire via email as well as mail.

The initial survey package will be mailed to schools in September 2014. Schools will either receive the paper Teacher Listing Form, School Questionnaire, and Principal Questionnaire, or invitations to provide an electronic list of teachers and complete the School and Principal web-based questionnaires.

All nonresponding schools will receive two reminder letters prompting them to complete their outstanding questionnaires. Following the reminder letters, a package of outstanding school-level paper questionnaires will be sent to nonresponding schools. Schools that do not provide a list of teachers will be contacted by telephone. Data are not expected to be collected by telephone except as a last resort, and those responses will be captured in the Internet version of the Teacher Listing Form.

Teacher questionnaires will be mailed on a flow basis once the Teacher Listing Forms are received, processed, and the sample is selected. Teachers will either be offered an Internet response option with an advance letter providing the user name, password, and survey website, or sent a paper Teacher Questionnaire. Nonresponding teachers will receive two reminder letters prompting them to complete their questionnaire. Some teachers will also receive an initial invitation and reminders by email. Following the reminder letters, a paper Teacher Questionnaire will be sent to nonresponding teachers.

4. Methods For Maximizing Response Rates

The primary focus of the pilot test is optimizing the NTPS design by integrating Internet data collection strategies. The experiments proposed will be described in greater detail in the subsequent package. The purpose of this request is to complete research review packages required by a limited number of districts. Completing these packages allows us to conduct the research with sampled schools in these districts. If we are unable to complete the packages we will not be able to conduct the NTPS pilot test with schools in these districts, lowering our response rate and compromising our ability to determine the best methods for conducting the 2015-16 NTPS data collection.

The general methods utilized by previous rounds of SASS to increase response rate will be also utilized in the NTPS pilot test, including:

- Obtaining endorsements from key organizations;
- Stressing the importance of participation and the direct benefits of the study to educators; and
- Multiple follow-up reminder mailings.

5. Tests Of Procedures And Methods

As noted previously, this pilot test is designed to optimize data collection for the 2015-16 NTPS, by imbedding in it a number of experiments to identify methods to increase response rates and reduce bias in the full scale NTPS. More details on each of these experiments will be provided in the subsequent pilot test data collection request, to be submitted to OMB in May 2014.

The following experiments are embedded in the Pilot Test design:

- The purpose of the Questionnaire Mode Experiment is to determine whether paper questionnaires or Internet survey instruments (i.e., mail-only versus internet sequential modes) are the most effective mode of collecting the teacher list, school, and principal data from schools and principals. The pilot test design includes a split-panel experiment with schools randomly assigned to the paper questionnaires or Internet instruments for all three forms sent to schools: teacher listing form, principal questionnaire, and school questionnaire.
- The purpose of the Teacher Listing Form (TLF) Email Experiment is to assess the feasibility of collecting teacher email addresses and the quality of those received. The pilot test design includes a split-panel experiment with schools randomly assigned to a TLF with a field for teacher email addresses or a TLF without a field for teacher email addresses.
- The purpose of the Teacher Invitation Mode Experiment is to identify the more effective method to invite teachers to complete the Teacher Questionnaire. The pilot test design includes an experiment with schools randomly assigned to an Invitation Mode for their sampled teachers. Options include: initial invitation to the Teacher Questionnaire Internet instrument via email and a paper invitation letter; initial invitation to the Teacher Questionnaire Internet instrument via a paper invitation letter only; and initial invitation to complete the Teacher Questionnaire via a mailed paper questionnaire.
- The purpose of the Internet Questionnaire Design Experiment is to identify the optimal placement, length, wording, and formatting of item wording and instructions in an internet survey. NTPS has many long and technical questions, some of which have a full page of explanation accompanying them. Recent cognitive interviews suggest that respondents are ignoring the instructions leading to measurement error. This experiment will attempt to identify strategies for improving compliance with instructions. This test will be run separately from the other experiments.