NATIONAL TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL SURVEY (NTPS)

2014-15 PILOT TEST

Volume I

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National Center For Education Statistics (NCES)

1. **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,
  + 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,
* Timely,
  + Administered and providing new data every two years instead of every 4 years,
  + 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,
  + Potentially linked with other collections such as EDFacts and CRDC, or maintains 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 study’s narrowed focus on national estimates and on the teacher and principal labor market. In addition, the NTPS will measure the state of K-12 schools 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 the decomposition of concepts and optimal placement of instructions 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 decomposition, 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.

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

U.S. Census Bureau

Washington, DC 20233

(301) 457-1797

Ms. Jill Dever

Senior Research Statistician, RTI International

Statistics and Epidemiology Unit (RTI-DC)

701 13th Street N.W. Suite 750

Washington, D.C. 20005-3967

(202) 974-7846

Mr. Steve Tourkin

Chief, Education Surveys Branch

Demographic Surveys Division

U.S. Census Bureau

Washington, DC 20233

(301) 763-3791

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

Mr. Stephen Broughman

Statistician, Cross-Sectional Surveys Branch

Sample Surveys Division, NCES

1990 K Street, NW

Washington, DC 20006

(202) 502-7315

Ms. Kathryn Chandler

Statistician, Cross-Sectional Surveys Branch

Sample Surveys Division, NCES

1990 K Street, NW

Washington, DC 20006

(202) 502-7486

Dr. Cleo Redline

Senior Research Scientist,

Statistical Standards and Data Confidentiality, NCES

1990 K Street, NW

Washington, DC 20006

(202) 502-7371

Ms. Shawna Graham

Assistant Survey Director, Education Surveys Branch

U.S. Census Bureau

Washington, DC 20233

(301) 763-3017

Mr. Mark Masterton

Survey Statistician

U.S. Census Bureau

Washington, DC 20233

(301) 763-1998

Ms. Teresa Thomas

Survey Statistician

U.S. Census Bureau

Washington, DC 20233

(301) 763-3094

Mr. Andrew Zukerberg

Special Assistant

1990 K Street, NW

Washington, DC 20006

202.219.7056

**9. Provision of payments or Gifts to Respondents**

NCES will not provide any cash incentives 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 sample size, projected number of responses, estimated average response time, and the total estimated respondent burden for the full-scale field activities for the 2014-15 NTPS Pilot Test are as follows:

Table 3. Estimates of respondent burden in hours, covering field activities for the NTPS Pilot Test

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity/Respondent Type** | **Sample** | **Expected response rate** | **Number of respondents\*** | **Number of responses** | **Per respondent (minutes)** | **Total burden (hours)** |
|  | | | | | | |
| **SCHOOL STAFF** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Teacher listing form, e-mail addresses | 6,708 | 0.50 | 3,354 | 3,354 | 30 | 1,677 |
| Teacher listing form, no e-mail addresses | 2,236 | 0.50 | 1,118 | 1,118 | 30 | 559 |
| School internet questionnaire | 4,472 | 0.50 | 2,236 | 2,236 | 22 | 820 |
| School paper questionnaire | 4,472 | 0.50 | 2,236 | 2,236 | 22 | 820 |
| **PRINCIPALS** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mailout package | 8,944 | 1 | 8,944 | 8,944 | 2 | 298 |
| Principal internet questionnaire | 4,472 | 0.50 | *2,236* | 2,236 | 17 | 634 |
| Principal paper questionnaire | 4,472 | 0.50 | *2,236* | 2,236 | 17 | 634 |
| **TEACHERS** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| E-mail invitation (group A) | 2,600 | 1 | 2,600 | 2,600 | 2 | 87 |
| Internet invitation letter (group B) | 9,136 | 1 | 9,136 | 9,136 | 2 | 305 |
| Paper questionnaire invitation (group C) | 9,136 | 1 | 9,136 | 9,136 | 2 | 305 |
| Internet questionnaire | 11,736 | 0.50 | *5,868* | 5,868 | 34 | 3,325 |
| Paper questionnaire | 9,136 | 0.50 | *4,568* | 4,568 | 34 | 2,588 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ***Total Response Burden Main Study*** |  |  | ***38,760*** | ***53,668*** |  | ***12,053*** |
| **Internet Instructions Study** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| E-mail invitation | 4,000 | 1 | 4,000 | 4,000 | 2 | 133 |
| Internet Survey | 4,000 | 0.30 | *1,200* | 1,200 | 20 | 400 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ***Total Response Burden Internet******Study*** |  |  | ***4,000*** | ***5,200*** |  | ***533*** |
| *Total Response Burden* |  |  | ***42,760*** | ***58,868*** |  | ***12,586*** |

*\* The numbers of respondents shown in gray italic font represents double counts, and do not contribute to the total number of respondents.*

The data collection for the 2014-2015 NTPS Pilot Test begins with sending to each sampled school an initial school mailout package including invitations to complete a Teacher Listing Form, a School Questionnaire, and a Principal Questionnaire. The form of the invitation will vary based on the questionnaire collection mode. The initial school mailout package includes the paper questionnaires when the school was sampled for the paper questionnaire mode. Questionnaires are considered to be "complete" when they are completed via the Internet instruments or completed on paper and mailed or faxed back. The mailout package goes directly to the principal at the school level. The principal is expected to spend the time to read the advance letter and make a determination about the school’s participation in the school-based surveys (teacher listing form, principal, and school). The principal is asked to complete the Principal Questionnaire. Anyone in the school knowledgeable about the topics in the Teacher Listing Form or the School Questionnaire may complete those forms.

Schools are provided instructions for tracking the statuses of their school’s questionnaires through the NTPS Respondent Status Center. The assumption is that a high percentage of schools will designate a person that is not the principal to track the statuses of their school’s questionnaires. Schools that do not respond to the initial survey request will receive up to three additional requests to complete the questionnaires by mail. Schools that have not responded to these mailings will be contacted by phone. The telephone calls will focus on the completion of the Teacher Listing Form since it is needed to draw a sample for the Teacher Questionnaire experiments. However, these schools will also be encouraged to respond to the School and Principal questionnaires during the call as necessary. Teacher questionnaires are sent out on a flow basis by either e-mail or paper once the teacher listing forms are received, processed, and the sample is selected. The invitation mode will be determined by assignment to treatment group.

Teachers will be offered either an Internet response option, by letter providing the user name, password, and survey link, or a paper response option. A subset of the teachers receiving the internet response option will receive email invitations to the survey. The first invitation will contain a username and the second will contain a password. Both emails will contain a link to the survey. Up to three additional mailings will be sent to respondents as necessary. The internet group will receive a paper questionnaire with their later mailing.

Teachers selected to participate in the Internet Instructions Study will receive the same treatments as the email group in the main pilot study. However, they will be directed to NCES servers to take a short (12 minute) Internet questionnaire.

Respondents to the field activities for the NTPS Pilot Test will not incur any costs other than of their time to fill out questionnaires. The standard NCES procedure for estimating cost is to multiply the estimated total survey reporting hours (the average length of time it takes to complete the survey) by the average salary of school teachers. $38.73 is the average hourly earnings of local government employees who are primary, secondary, or special education teachers in the 2010 National Compensation Survey sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (see <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ncswage2010.htm>); data are compiled less frequently for public sector occupations than for private sector occupations. The respondent dollar cost for the field activities is estimated to be $487,456.

## 13. Estimates of Cost Burden

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

## 14. Costs to the Federal Government

The cost to the federal government for the NTPS Pilot Test is $3.9 million. The Census Bureau estimates were compiled from individual estimates developed within each Census Bureau division involved in the survey. Estimates were based on the sample sizes, the length of the questionnaires, and the data processing requirements. Administrative overhead, forms design, printing, and personnel costs are included. The cost to the federal government also includes support of data review, report preparation, user training presentations, and data dissemination activities, but does not include the NTPS program staff salaries and benefits.

## 15. Reasons for Changes in Response Burden and Costs

This request shows an increase in the estimated number of respondents and burden hours because the last approval was for preliminary activities while this request is for the 2014-2015 NTPS Pilot Test data collections. The initial response burden estimate for activities is based upon the finalized 2011-12 SASS questionnaires.

**16. Time Schedule for NTPS**

The operational schedule for conducting the activities for the NTPS Pilot Test is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Mail questionnaires/internet invitations to schools, request teacher lists | October, 2014 |
| Mail second questionnaire package to non responding schools | October, 2014 |
| Mail third package to non responding schools | November, 2014 |
| Mail fourth package to non responding schools | November – December, 2014 |
| Telephone follow-up with schools to obtain teacher lists | November, 2014 |
| Mail Teacher Questionnaires as teachers are sampled | October 2014-January, 2015 |
| Begin contacting teachers for Internet instructions study | January 2015 |
| Data capture of all questionnaires | October 2014 – March 2015 |
| Data processing | October 2014 – March 2015 |
| Analysis of Pilot Test experiments | November 2014 - December 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**

1. **Respondent Universe**
   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. **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.

The teacher sample for the contact invitation and the internet instructions study will be supplemented with email addresses purchased from MDR. Additionally, we may utilize email addresses from MDR for schools sampled in the main study to ensure enough cases for the email treatment group in the teacher contact study.

1. **Statistical Procedures For Collecting Information**
   1. **Sampling**

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

* 8,944 public schools and school principals; and
* 24,872 public school teachers.

***Public Schools***

The level of precision achieved by the 2007-08 SASS was evaluated to inform the sample design decisions for the 2014-15 NTPS Pilot Test. The precision analysis was based upon important analysis variables as well as generic proportions to address other important SASS characteristics. These variables and values were evaluated:

* by state;
* by school type (public charter, traditional public, overall public);
* by region within school type;
* by grade level (elementary, middle, secondary, and combined );
* by grade level and region within school type; and
* by teachers’ years of experience.

The NTPS Pilot test is designed to meet precision requirements that allow for comparison among the variables under evaluation in the NPTS Pilot Test experiments. The desired level of precision for NTPS Pilot Test estimates was determined to be the ability to detect differences in response rates of 5 percentage points with 95% confidence and 80% power. This assumes a response rate for the Pilot Test of 50 percent.

Based on this analysis, the sampling frame will be partitioned into approximately 32 sampling strata for public schools. The goals of the sample design are to ensure sufficient numbers for precise estimates of response rates at the experiment level. Public schools are divided into two categories to create the sampling strata: charter schools (16 strata) and traditional public schools (16 strata). *Charter schools* are identified from the CCD. The 16 charter school sampling strata are constructed by crossing the four-category school level variable (elementary, middle, secondary, and combined) with the four-level locale variable (city, suburb, town, rural). The 16 sampling strata for the *traditional public schools*, excluding charters schools, are also defined by crossing the four-category school level variable with the four-level locale variable.

***Teachers within All Schools***

As with the school-level analysis, percentages of populations by important variables ranging from 2.5 (rare occurrence) to 95 percent were evaluated using the sample allocation of teachers by level of teaching experience within school type. The NTPS Pilot Test teacher sample design was intended to be able to detect differences in response rates of 5 percentage points with 95% confidence and 80% power. This assumes a teacher response rate of 50%. Teachers will be randomly sampled from roster information provided by each participating sampled school after sorting on level of experience and subject taught. For the teacher contact study, we will purchase email addresses from MDR for cases where the school did not provide them. We will also purchase teacher email addresses for the Internet instructions study. For the main pilot study, the average number of teachers sampled per school will be five teachers, with a maximum number of 10 teachers to avoid overburdening the schools. For the supplemental Internet instructions study, additional teachers will be sampled.

***Sampling – Principals within All Schools***

For all traditional public and public charter schools, the principal will be included in the survey as a result of the school being selected.

* 1. **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.

* 1. **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 and, as such, it does not include the personal visit follow-up operations that are a critical component in raising response rates during the full-scale survey. Additionally, because many of the teacher email addresses in the Internet instructions study will be purchased from a private vendor, we anticipate a lower response rate. We have based our burden model on achieving a 30% response rate.

1. **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.

1. **Methods For Maximizing Response Rates**

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; 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.

The general methods utilized by previous rounds of SASS to increase response rate will be 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 nonresponse follow-up mailings.

1. **Tests Of Procedures And Methods**

As noted previously, this pilot test is designed to optimize data collection for the 2015-16 NTPS by serving as a platform for experimenting with a number of data collection methods. The alternative methods will be evaluated on the basis of design effectiveness (response rates and bias, for example) and cost. The approaches that offer the most appropriate balance between survey and cost efficiency will be used in the 2015-16 NTPS full scale data collection. 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. Measures of interest for this experiment include unit response rates by treatment group and respondent characteristics, item response rates, item frequency distribution, and cost.
* 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 experimental treatments apply to both the TLF internet instrument and the paper TLF questionnaire. Measures of interest for this experiment include unit response rates by treatment group and respondent characteristics, item missing rates, number of undeliverable email addresses, response rates for school and principal questionnaires by TLF treatment group, paradata on the length of time to submit the TLF, method of submission, number of separate logins to complete, completion date, etc., and cost.
* When combining both school level experiments (Questionnaire Mode Experiment and Teacher Listing Form (TLF) Email Experiment), there are four distinct treatment groups), as follows:
  + Panel 1: Internet Questionnaires and TLF with email address field
  + Panel 2: Paper Questionnaires and TLF with email address field
  + Panel 3: Internet Questionnaires and TLF without email address field
  + Panel 4: Paper Questionnaires and TLF without teacher email address field
* 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 the following:
  + Initial invitation to the Teacher Questionnaire Internet instrument via email and a paper invitation letter (Invitation Mode A). The data collection strategy for this treatment group will include three mailings of paper invitations, mailed concurrently with email invitations, followed by a fourth and final mailing containing a paper Teacher Questionnaire.
  + Initial invitation to the Teacher Questionnaire Internet instrument via a paper invitation letter only (Invitation Mode B). The data collection strategy for this treatment group will include three mailings of paper invitations, followed by a fourth and final mailing containing a paper Teacher Questionnaire.
  + Initial invitation to complete the Teacher Questionnaire via a mailed paper questionnaire (Invitation Mode C). The data collection strategy for this treatment group will include four mailings of a paper Teacher Questionnaire. Measures of interest for this experiment include unit response rates by treatment group, number of contacts, and respondent characteristics, and cost.
* 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. The elements that will be experimentally varied are: placement of the instructions (before or after the question), format of the instructions (paragraph or list), and the presence of a preface introducing the item. The control for this experiment is a treatment with no instructions. This will allow NCES to compare each of the treatment groups to a no instructions group. In addition to a including a subset of planned NTPS teacher questionnaire items, the instruction experiment questionnaire contains several items that have been designed to elicit a specific effect. For example, an item has been added that asks teachers to report the number of tests and quizzes they give. Instructions are provided that greatly narrow the definition of tests and quizzes, so if teachers read the instruction we should see a significant reduction in reporting compared to the control group which did not have the modifying instruction. These modified items will be the key items for analysis in the experiment.

Table 5 below shows the allocation of sample to the different treatment groups. The experiments will utilize a factorial design to allow for analysis of each of the experiments.

Table 5: Assignment of Sample to Treatment Groups

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Respondent Type** | **Experimental Group** | **Treatment Group** | **Number of Cases** |
| **School Staff** |  | Teacher listing form, e-mail addresses | 6,708 |
| Teacher listing form, no e-mail addresses | 2,236 |
| School internet questionnaire | 4,472 |
| School paper questionnaire | 4,472 |
| **Principals** |  | Principal internet questionnaire | 4,472 |
| Principal paper questionnaire | 4,472 |
| **Teachers** | *Main Study* | E-mail invitation (group A) | 2,600 |
| Internet invitation letter (group B) | 9,136 |
| Paper questionnaire invitation (group C) | 9,136 |
| Internet questionnaire | 11,736 |
| Paper questionnaire | 9,136 |
| *Instructions Study* | Control: No instructions | 1312 |
| Instructions after, list format, no preface | 336 |
| Instructions after, list format, preface | 336 |
| Instructions after, paragraph format, no preface | 336 |
| Instructions after, paragraph format, preface | 336 |
| Instructions before, list format, no preface | 336 |
| Instructions before, list format, preface | 336 |
| Instructions before, paragraph format, no preface | 336 |
| Instructions before, paragraph format, preface | 336 |