

Memorandum

United States Department of Education
Institute of Education Sciences
National Center for Education Statistics

DATE: December 10, 2014
TO: Shelly Martinez, OMB
THROUGH: Kashka Kubzdela, NCES
FROM: Isaiah O'Rear, NCES
SUBJECT: School Climate Surveys (SCLS) Pilot Test 2015 Responses to OMB Passback (OMB # 1850-0803 v.119)

Provided below are responses to OMB passback for the School Climate Surveys (SCLS) Pilot Test 2015 (OMB # 1850-0803 v.119).

1. [The Generic Clearance package under which this pilot is submitted says the following in SS A2](#) - "Because the questionnaires being tested under this clearance are still in the process of development, the data that result from these collections are not considered official statistics of NCES or other Federal agencies. Data will not be made public, except when included in research reports prepared for sponsors inside and outside of NCES. The results may also be prepared for presentations related to survey methodology at professional meetings or publications on NCES website and in professional journals." [How does providing results to districts and schools fit within the scope of this clearance?](#)

NCES: One of the primary objectives of the pilot is to test the capacity of the SCLS platform to enable a local school or district administrator to collect local school climate data, which, per Volume I of this package, is the intended use of the SCLS in the future, after the benchmarking study (which will be submitted to OMB under a regular clearance) is completed. During the pilot test, with NCES assistance, each administrator will collect their own local data using the SCLS platform and will only have access to their own local data that they collected. NCES will not provide data or statistics to the schools or districts, but will instead obtain from them the data the schools/districts collect from the school's staff and families after the data have been stripped of direct identifiers. NCES will use aggregate data in an R&D report, but will not publish aggregate data as statistics or estimates. Generating the local data is the goal of the tool being developed and therefore a central part of what is being tested. As such, we do not believe that the pilot test poses a contradiction with the excerpt from SSA2 of the system clearance cited above.

2. [Can NCES provide OMB with the instructions on "how to take the survey" that it is providing on laptops to recruited schools?](#)

NCES: We have already attached the instructions that the survey respondents will see when entering the system to fill out the survey (Attachment 4 SCLS Pilot Test 2015 - Platform Instructions.pdf). Because the software platform itself is still being programmed, we do not yet have the final version of the instructions for system administration (these will not be seen by respondents, only by system administrators). We have now included in Attachment 4 a partial draft of the technical system administrator instructions that will be provided to schools and districts. In January 2015 we will submit to OMB for a separate 1850-0803 clearance the finalized system administrator instructions and FAQs. In the meantime, we need this clearance in order to begin recruiting schools and districts as soon as possible.

3. Especially for the non-student surveys, what do those instructions include on issues like frames, nonresponse follow up, response rates, assessing bias, etc.?

NCES: The teacher, parent, staff, and principal surveys can only be administered anonymously, so no nonresponse follow-up is possible because survey administrators will not be able to know who has responded. The student surveys have the capacity for linkage with local datasets, but for administrators who do not use the linkage functionality, the student survey will be administered anonymously also making nonresponse follow-up impossible. The platform includes a page to monitor submission rates, which is an approximation of response rates, but we have avoided providing specific advice on desired response rates.

4. Post-pilot, how does NCES anticipate its role in districts and schools using the survey instruments changing from its role in the pilot?

NCES: In the pilot, NCES and AIR plan to provide extensive step-by-step support to schools, including limited on-site support, if necessary. After the pilot, the NCES task leader will serve as the point of contact for providing support for using the software, collecting data, and generating reports. The Office of Safe and Healthy Students also will provide materials and guidance for schools that have administered the survey and want to use the results to inform efforts for school climate improvement.

5. For all questionnaires – please make sure race question instructions and categories are correct.

NCES: We have already revised the race question instructions and categories to comply with guidance and provided them to OMB through ROCIS submission on December 2, 2014.

6. Student Questionnaire:

- It seems odd to introduce a definition of bullying, ask one question that uses the word bullying, then ask a series of questions that use the phrase “teased or picked on” then ask another series of questions using the word “bullying.” Is the respondent supposed to consider all of these terms synonymous? Should the definition of bullying explain this? Should the order of the questions be changed? It flows better on the instructional staff survey.

NCES: We have re-ordered the items to keep all items related to bullying at the end of this topic. The respondent is not supposed to consider all of these terms synonymous. The “teased or picked on” questions are meant to be broader than the “bullying” questions and collect data on all forms of aggression. Bullying is meant to be interpreted more narrowly; as it follows the definition of stopbullying.gov and refers to the subset of aggression that includes (a) power imbalance and (b) repetition.

- Why is “MySpace” still an example? According to a recent Post article, it’s been losing users for nearly 10 years and is more about music downloads now than posting information.

NCES: This example was removed.