

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 12, 2015

TO: Sharon Mar, OMB

FROM: Chris Boccanfuso, ED/Institute of Education Sciences

SUBJECT: OMB comments for Examination of Trends in Algebra II Enrollment and Completion in Texas Public High Schools

Please see our response below to OMB comments on Task 4.10.

1. The telephone interview follow-up document includes a very long introduction, and we're not sure that the researchers will get a good response if the interviewer has to read a full page of information before asking if the person on the line will participate. Is there a way to streamline the introduction?
We have removed some of the text from the introduction, as this information is also included on the survey that we are asking individuals to complete. Please see the revisions to Appendix A-3.
2. In the supporting statement and research questions, it is clear that the researchers plan to disaggregate data by income and race/ethnicity. The file that includes the data specification shows that the researchers plan to collect disability status data as well. We would recommend that they disaggregate their findings by disability status in addition to income and race—policies that allow “easier” diploma tracks can lead to clustering SWDs within those tracks. In addition, unless otherwise planned as part of the disaggregation by race/ethnicity, we think it would be useful to disaggregate findings by EL status (ESL participation).
A special education student in Texas can graduate under a diploma plan for students with an IEP or under the regular diploma plans. If a special education student graduates under the regular diploma plans they will be included in our analyses. If the sample is large enough at the state level we will disaggregate our results by this student group. We would prefer not to disaggregate by ESL participation because, at the high school level, very few students participate in ESL. However, we can also take a look at the state-wide ELS numbers and see if there are enough students. If so, we will disaggregate our results by this student subgroup.
3. We would also flag for you the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 which allows schools to opt out of collecting free/reduced price lunch applications. We're not sure if the sampling plan accounts for that issue or of how CEP is implemented in TX but it may affect the disaggregated analyses by free/reduced price lunch if schools are not collecting those data. Have the researchers considered this? OMB can acquire some district-level data if that would be useful.

The sampling plan does not account for this because TEA does not collect data on which schools/districts have opted out of collecting free/reduced price lunch applications. The only thing we can do is note how many districts in Texas have opted not to collect this data (when districts opt not to collect this data, they categorized all students in the district as low-income). In addition, the records maintained and used by TEA for their official state analyses are the same that we will be using in this study. Therefore, our analyses will reflect those that would have been conducted by the state of Texas without support from REL Southwest, and will be consistent with other analyses of data related to this issue that TEA has performed. Since the analyses are aggregated to the state-level, we are not sure how helpful it would be to acquire additional district-level data.