

National Center for Education Statistics

ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) Benchmark Study 2016

Supporting Statement Part A

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- Appendix C – Platform and Administration Instructions
- Appendix D – Pilot Test Report (draft)
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A.1 Circumstances Making Collection of Information Necessary

A.1.1 Purpose of This Submission

The ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) are a suite of survey instruments being developed for schools, districts, and states by the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). This national effort extends current activities that measure school climate, including the state-level efforts of the Safe and Supportive Schools (S3) grantees, which were awarded funds in 2010 by the ED's Office of Safe and Healthy Students (OSHS) to improve school climate. Through the EDSCLS, schools nationwide will have access to survey instruments and a survey platform that will allow for the collection and reporting of school climate data across stakeholders at the local level. The surveys can be used to produce school-, district-, and state-level scores on various indicators of school climate from the perspectives of students, teachers, noninstructional school staff and principals, and parents and guardians.

NCES is requesting to conduct a national EDSCLS benchmark study, collecting data from a nationally representative sample of schools across the United States, to create a national comparison point for users of the ED School Climate Surveys. The proposed data collection follows cognitive laboratory testing conducted in 2014 (OMB #1850-0803 v.102) and a pilot test conducted in 2015 (OMB #1850-0803 v.129). The benchmark study data collection will be carried out on behalf of NCES under a contract by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and its subcontractor, Sanametrix.

A.1.2 Legislative Authorization

The EDSCLS national benchmark study is conducted by NCES within the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). NCES will conduct this study in close consultation with offices and organizations within and outside ED. The EDSCLS benchmark study is authorized by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA; 20 U.S. Code §9543).

A.1.3 Prior Related Studies

This is the first time NCES is collecting benchmark data on a series of school climate topics from multiple perspectives at public schools across the nation.

A.1.4 Study Design for the EDSCLS National Benchmark Study

A nationally representative sample of 500 schools serving students in grades 5-12 will be sampled to participate in the national benchmark study in spring 2016. Four web-based surveys – student, parent,¹ instructional staff, and principal/non-instructional staff surveys will be administered through the EDSCLS platform hosted on the NCES server. The data collected from the sampled schools will be used to produce national school climate scores on the various topics covered by EDSCLS. The national scores will be released in the updated EDSCLS platform and provide a basis for comparison between data collected by schools and school systems and the national school climate.

A.1.5 EDSCLS Cognitive Laboratory Testing and Pilot Test

The development of the EDSCLS survey instruments started in 2013 with a review of the existing school climate literature and survey items. The Technical Review Panel (TRP) meeting was held in early 2014 to

¹ Parent survey results from the pilot test will be used to determine if the parent survey will be included in the national benchmark study.

recommend items to be included in the EDSCLS. Then the EDSCLS draft survey items were created, building on the existing items and recommendations from the TRP. In the summer of 2014, cognitive interviews were conducted on the new and revised items in one-on-one settings with 78 individual participants: students, parents, teachers, principals, and noninstructional staff from the District of Columbia, Texas, and California. In addition to cognitive interviews, usability testing of the survey platform was performed with 32 individual participants: students, parents, teachers, principals, and noninstructional staff from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Changes to both the survey items and survey platform were made based on these interviews and testing. The cognitive interviews and usability testing report was included as Attachment 5 in the submission approved in December 2014 ([OMB# 1850-0803 v.119](#)).

The pilot test of the EDSCLS took place from March to May of 2015. It was an operational test, under “live” conditions of all components of the survey system (e.g., survey instruments and data collection, processing, and reporting tools). A convenience sample of 50 public schools that varied across key characteristics (region, locale, and racial composition) participated in the pilot test. The EDSCLS platform was tested at the state level (containing multiple districts in one platform), district level (containing multiple schools in one platform), and the school level (containing only one school in the platform). All survey questionnaires were administered online through the EDSCLS platform. The data from the pilot test were used to refine the EDSCLS survey items and about one third of the items were dropped from the pilot version. The final EDSCLS instruments have 74 items for students, 83 items for instructional staff, and noninstructional staff (excluding 21 principal only items), and 40 items for parents.

In addition to the items used in the pilot test, the benchmarking survey instruments also include two new items requested by OSHS in June 2015 because school communities nationwide have identified sexual violence and/or teen dating violence as an issue that students and schools are increasingly facing. If schools are going to address this issue, data should be available to provide them with a sense of prevalence to prevent escalation and to enable them to create appropriate supports and protective factors for improvement of the learning environment and student success. Preventing teen dating and gender-based violence is part of creating a safe and healthy learning environment. “Students at this school feel unsafe because of sexual assault or dating violence” is added to the student survey for high school students only (Ssafpsaf154) and “The following types of problems occur at this school often: sexual assault or violence” is added to the two staff surveys (Isafpsaf143, Nsafpsaf147). Cognitive interviews will be conducted in 2015 to test these new items with middle grade and high school students, teachers, and instructional staff.

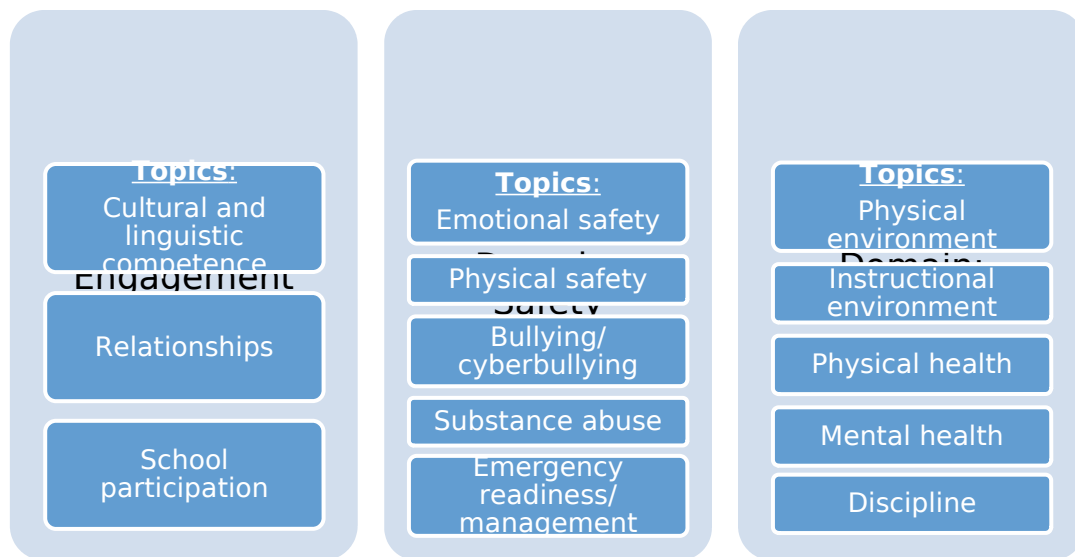
A.2 Purpose and Uses of the Data

The U.S. Department of Education has prioritized research about school climate and the use of such research to develop more effective policy and school practices. Although many school climate surveys have been developed, there is no consensus on precise definitions for the factors that make up school climate or a common reference for comparison nationally. The data from the national benchmark study will be used to create national school climate scale scores for 12 out of 13 topics covered by EDSCLS for three of the four respondent groups – students, instructional staff, and noninstructional staff and principals.² National scale scores are currently planned for the 3 domains in the parent survey based on

² Scale scores are not planned for the emergency readiness/management topic based on TRP recommendations.

TRP recommendation, response burden concerns, and the low parent response rates generally reported by districts administering similar school climate surveys. If the parent response rates are low in the participating schools in the pilot test, NCES may decide to exclude the parent survey from the benchmark study. Figure 1 shows the EDSCLS domains and topics.

Figure 1. EDSCLS model of school climate



A.3 Use of Information Technology

Self-administered web-based surveys will be used to administer EDSCLS. For the benchmark study, the instruments will be hosted on NCES servers. Respondents will be provided with log-in credentials and the web address for the survey. The surveys can be taken on computers as well as mobile devices such as tablets or smart phones.

A.4 Efforts to Identify Duplication

The EDSCLS benchmark study will not be duplicative of other studies. Although the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) and the School Crime Supplement (SCS) survey collect school-level information about victimization, crime, and safety, and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) collects data on health risk behaviors in middle and high schools, the benchmark study is the only nationally representative federal study to collect information on multiple aspects of school climate and from multiple stakeholders—students in grades 5-12, their parents, and teachers and staff in schools serving students in these grades. The benchmark study will collect data on the 13 aspects of the school climate noted earlier, will open up possibilities for new research related to school climate topics, and will allow important comparisons to be made between school climates locally and nationally.

A.5 Method Used to Minimize Burden on Small Businesses

EDSCLS does not impose burden on small businesses or other small entities.

A.6 Frequency of Data Collection

Currently, the national EDSCLS benchmark study is only planned to be administered one time, in the spring 2016.

A.7 Special Circumstances of Data Collection

No special circumstances of data collection are anticipated.

A.8 Consultants outside the Agency

Recognizing the significance of the EDSCLS benchmark study data collection, several strategies have been implemented to obtain critical review of planned project activities and interim and final products. These strategies include consultations with persons and organizations both internal and external to NCES, ED, and the federal government. To date, consultations focused on interactions with the TRP in combination with cognitive laboratory testing of instrument content and pilot testing of content and operational aspects of EDSCLS.

The EDSCLS TRP will be consulted again before finalizing the survey items for the national benchmark study. The membership of the TRP (provided below) represents a broad spectrum of the researchers in the field and representatives from school districts and schools. The nonfederal members serve as expert reviewers on item content and format.

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A.9 Provision of Payments or Gifts to Respondents

There is no monetary payment to respondents in the EDSCLS national benchmark study. Each school that participates in the benchmark study will receive a tablet valued up to \$500 to help with the data collection. Additionally, after the completion of the national EDSCLS study, each participating school will receive a report with measures of school climate perceptions from the perspectives of the school's respondents along with comparisons to the perceptions expressed in the EDSCLS national sample. The use of this incentive will help participation in two ways. 1) Each school will be encouraged to conduct a universe survey of students, staff, and parents, which can be a substantial burden on schools. A tablet will enable schools to see how the instruments will display on different mobile devices and to allow survey participation during school meetings and events to help encourage participation. More importantly, for noninstructional staff or other staff who don't regularly use computers for their work, a tablet will provide easy access to online surveys. We have received feedback from some of the districts that participated in the pilot test that tablets were great incentives to obtain their principals' buy-in to the pilot data collection. 2) The provision of a tablet will also act as an incentive for schools that may otherwise field the EDSCLS data collection before NCES' benchmark study to wait. ED will release the free-to-use EDSCLS platform in fall 2015. In schools selected for the EDSCLS 2016 benchmark study sample, which are in states or districts that want to conduct their own data collection, the incentive will be used to encourage their participation in the national benchmark study. The incentive tablet will be delivered to a school once it agrees to participate and provides a range of dates for collecting data and an estimated number of respondents for each survey.

A.10 Assurance of Confidentiality

NCES assures participating individuals and institutions that all identifiable information collected under EDSCLS may be used only 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].

School coordinators will receive materials that both describe the study and clearly indicate that participation is voluntary. The data collection will be hosted on the NCES server. All NCES staff, AIR staff, and any school staff with access to data collection files will sign an affidavit of nondisclosure attesting to the fact that the data will only be used for statistical purposes, and no attempt will be made to identify any individual in the file. Violations are a class E felony with penalties of up to a \$250,000 fine and/or up to 5 years in prison.

If a school requests its data, the raw staff or parent response data can be transferred to the school without any directly identifying PII³ and student response data can be transferred with or without any directly

³ EDSCLS platform doesn't retain direct identifying PII for the staff and parent surveys.

identifying PII. The school needs to make the choice regarding the type of the student data file they would like to receive when confirming the school's participation in the benchmark study because the decision affects the informed consent language shown to students.

For schools that are not requesting individual student data, the following text is shown on the informed consent page for the student survey:

“The experiences of students are critical to understanding school climate, and the best way to understand those experiences is to ask students themselves. Apart from improving your school climate, the information that you provide will be combined with responses from students in other schools like yours and will be used by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to provide national data that can be compared to data of individual schools, districts, and states. Data provided to NCES may be used only for statistical purposes and will not be disclosed or used in identifiable form for any other purpose, except as required by law (Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA) of 2002, 20 U.S.C., § 9573).

The data you provide may also be used by your school, district, and/or state to better understand the current climate in your school. Your answers will be combined with the answers of other students at your school and district and used to create records about the climate of your school. These reports will not identify any person or their responses.”

For schools that request student data without directly identifying PII, the following text is shown on the informed consent page for the student survey:

“The experiences of students are critical to understanding school climate, and the best way to understand those experiences is to ask students themselves. Apart from improving your school climate, the information that you provide will be combined with responses from students in other schools like yours and will be used by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to provide national data that can be compared to data of individual schools, districts, and states. Data provided to NCES may be used only for statistical purposes and will not be disclosed or used in identifiable form for any other purpose, except as required by law (Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA) of 2002, 20 U.S.C., § 9573).

The data you provide may also be used by your school, district, and/or state to better understand the current climate in your school. Answers to individual questions will not identify any person and the only people who may see answers to individual questions are authorized personnel at your school and district (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99). Your answers will be combined with the answers of other students at your school and district and used to create records about the climate of your school. These reports will not identify any person or their responses.”

For schools that request student data with directly identifying PII for linkage with other data the schools may have, the following text is shown on the informed consent page for the student survey:

“The experiences of students are critical to understanding school climate, and the best way to understand those experiences is to ask students themselves. Apart from improving your school climate, the information that you provide will be combined with responses from students in other schools like yours and will be used by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to provide national data that can be compared to data of individual schools, districts, and states. Data provided to NCES may be used only for statistical purposes, except as required by law or described here (Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA) of 2002, 20 U.S.C., § 9573).

The data you provide may also be used by your school, district, and/or state to better understand the current climate in your school. The only people who may see your answers to individual questions are authorized personnel at your school and district (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99). Your answers will be combined with the answers of other students at your school and district and used to create records about the climate of your school. Although these reports will not identify any person or their responses, your data may be combined with other data about you to help improve the climate of your school.”

The following text is shown for the two staff surveys:

“The experiences of students, staff, and parents are critical to understanding school climate, and the best way to understand those experiences is to ask all members of the school community. Apart from improving your school climate, the information that you provide will be combined with responses from staff in other schools like yours and will be used by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to provide national data that can be compared to data of individual schools, districts, and states. Data you provide to NCES may be used only 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 (ESRA) of 2002, 20 U.S.C., § 9573).

The results of this survey are confidential. The data you provide may also be used by your school and district to better understand the current climate in your school. Your answers will be combined with the answers of other respondents in your school and district and used to create reports about the climate of your school. These reports will not identify any person or their responses.”

The following text is shown for the parent survey:

“The experiences of students, staff, and parents are critical to understanding school climate, and the best way to understand those experiences is to ask all members of the school community. Apart from improving your child’s school climate, the information that you provide will be combined with responses from parents of children in other schools and will be used by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to provide national data that can be compared to data of individual schools, districts, and states. Data you provide to NCES may be used only 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 (ESRA) of 2002, 20 U.S.C., § 9573).

The results of this survey are confidential. The data you provide may also be used by your child’s school and district to better understand the current climate in the school. Your answers will be combined with the answers of other respondents in your child’s school and district and used to create reports about the climate of the school. These reports will not identify any person or their responses.”

All instructions that respondents will see when accessing the data collection system, including the above text and the instructions to survey administrators are provided in Appendix C. Because the benchmark study will be conducted by NCES, the instructions to survey administrators only include guidance on how to support the data collection at the school level. Compared with the guide used in the 2015 pilot test, the instructions do not include information not directly relevant to the benchmark study, such as platform installation, data collection management, or nonresponse bias analysis.

AIR will adhere to NCES Statistical Standards, as described at <https://nces.ed.gov/statprog/2012/>. All data transfers will be encrypted using Federal Information Processing Standards 140-2 validated encryption tools.

Furthermore, ED has established a policy regarding the personnel security screening requirements for all contractor employees and their subcontractors to secure the confidentiality of EDSCLS respondents. The contractor must comply with these personnel security screening requirements throughout the life of the contract. The requirements are identified and summarized in ED directive OM: 5-101, which was last updated on January 29, 2008. There are several requirements that the contractor must meet for each employee working on the contract for 30 days or more. Among these requirements are that each person working on the contract must be assigned a position risk level. The risk levels are high, moderate, and low, based on the level of harm that a person in the position can cause to ED’s interests. Each person working on the contract must complete the requirements for a “Contractor Security Screening.” Depending on the risk level assigned to each person’s position, background investigations may be conducted for each project staff member.

A.11 Sensitive Questions

The EDSCS national benchmark study is a voluntary survey. No persons are required to respond to it and respondents may decline to answer any question in the survey. The items in the EDSCS for students, parents, instructional staff and noninstructional staff/principal are not of a sensitive nature and should not pose sensitivity concerns to respondents. All survey items are focused on the perceptions of respondents regarding various aspects of school climate. Respondents are not asked to report any personal incidences or behaviors.

A.12 Estimates of Response Burden

EDSCS will involve the collection of respondent data by self-administered web survey with the support from school coordinators. Table 1 shows the expected burden for the national benchmark study, which will be conducted in 500 schools. Based on 2012-13 CCD data, the average school size of 519 students, the student/teacher ratio of 17 to 1, and student/administrative and all other support staff ratio of 32 to 1 are used to calculate the total number of respondents. Based on reported response rates of similar surveys⁴, NCES estimates 80 percent response rates for student, teacher/instructional staff, and principal/noninstructional staff surveys, and a 50 percent response rate for the parent survey. The response burden is expected to be about 40 minutes for each student participating in the survey, about 30 minutes for teachers and noninstructional staff participating in the survey, and 10 minutes for parents participating in the survey. These estimates include the time to read instructions and complete all items.

Table 1. Estimate of hourly burden for recruitment and participation in EDSCS Benchmark Study

Type	Sample Size	Expected response rate	Number of respondents	Number of responses	Hours per respondent	Total hours
Recruitment						
School - Initial contact	1,000	--	1,000	1,000	0.05	50
Follow-up via phone or e-mail	600	--	600	600	0.15	90
Confirmation	500	--	500	500	0.05	25
Subtotal	--	--	1,000	2,100	--	165
Participation						
Students	259,500	0.80	207,600	207,600	0.67	139,092
Teachers/Instructional staff	15,265	0.80	12,212	12,212	0.50	6,106
Principal/Noninstructional staff	8,109	0.80	6,487	6,487	0.50	3,244
Parents	259,500	0.50	129,750	129,750	0.17	22,058
Coordinators	500	1.00	500	500	40.00	20,000
Subtotal	--	--	356,549	356,549	--	190,500
Total Burden	--	--	357,549	358,649	--	190,665

The hourly rates for Teachers/instructional staff, principals, noninstructional staff/coordinators and parents (\$27.98, \$44.23, \$19.46, \$22.71 respectively) are based on Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) May 2014 National Occupational and Employment Wage Estimates⁵, assuming 2,080 hours per year. The

⁴ These surveys include Conditional for Learning Survey in Cleveland, Safe and Supportive Schools Survey in Iowa, Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and Albuquerque Public Schools Staff School Climate Survey.

federal minimum wage of \$7.25 is used as the hourly rate for students. For the benchmark study, a total of 190,665 burden hours are anticipated, resulting in a cost to respondents of approximately \$ 2,144,780.

A.13 Estimates of Cost to Respondents

Respondents will incur no costs for participation in this study beyond the time to respond.

A.14 Costs to the Federal Government

The total cost of the EDSCS National Benchmark Study data collection to the government is approximately \$992,416. This includes all direct and indirect costs of the data collection.

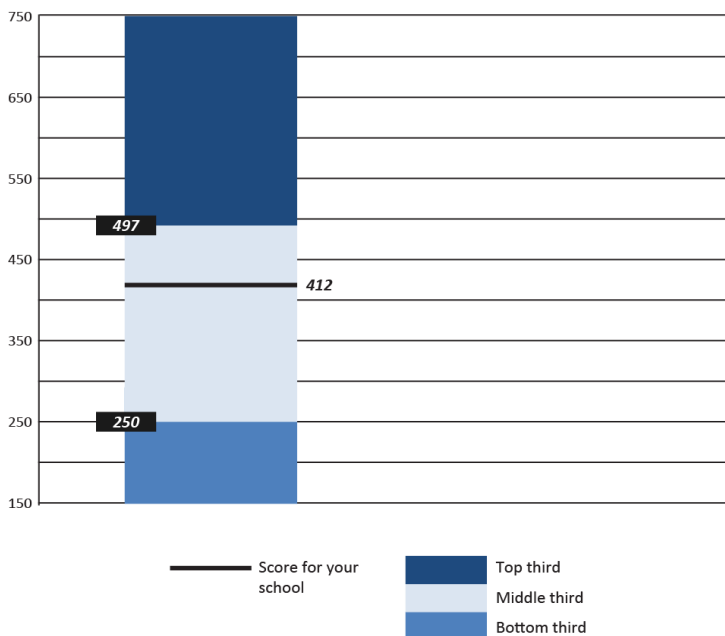
A.15 Reasons for Changes in Response Burden and Costs

This is the first time the national benchmark study is conducted, thus there is no change in response burden and cost.

A.16 Publication Plans and Time Schedule

The EDSCS national benchmark data will be made publically available through the second release of the EDSCS platform in fall 2016. These national data will be included as the context for school scores. For example, figure 2 shows one possible way of showing tertiles based on the national data along with a school's score. For more information, please see appendix E. We also plan to provide respondent-level subgroup reporting by grade (student only), sex, and race/ethnicity. If the number of respondents in some racial groups do not meet reporting standards, they will be collapsed into an "other" category.

Figure 2. SCLS scale report: Bar display with national information



After analyses of results, NCES will publish a report with national benchmark results in fall 2016. Anticipated schedule for this study is as follows:

January-February, 2016: Recruitment of sampled schools.

March-May, 2016: National benchmark data collection from 500 schools.

September, 2016: A revised school climate platform with national benchmark reporting available for download; a report with national benchmark results.

A.17 Approval to Not Display Expiration Date for OMB Approval

No special exception is being requested.

A.18 Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

No exceptions to the certification statement identified in the Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions of OMB Form 8 are being sought.