

Private School Universe Survey (PSS) June 2016 - May 2019

Supporting Statement Part B

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B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

Bl. Respondent Universe

The target population for the survey consists of all private schools in the United States that provide instruction to any of grades Kindergarten-12, or comparable ungraded levels (approximately 30,000 schools).

B2. Procedures for Data Collection—Statistical Methods, Estimation Procedures, Accuracy, and Anticipated Problems

The universe frame to be used by NCES for the 2017-18 PSS will be composed of the 2017-18 PSS list frame and the 2017-18 area-search frame. The list frame is based on the 2015-16 PSS and is updated with current membership lists from private school associations and private school lists from state departments of education and social services (for kindergarten programs)¹. The area list is developed after a systematic search of approximately 124 randomly selected primary sampling units (PSUs). The list of schools found in this search is unduplicated with the list frame to yield the area-frame schools. The area frame is used to represent schools missing from the list frame. The 2011-12 area-frame search was conducted in 124 PSUs and identified 354 unduplicated schools, weighting up to represent 1,941 private schools. Similarly, the universe frame to be used by NCES for the 2019-20 PSS will be composed of the 2019-20 PSS list frame and the 2019-20 area-search frame.

A combination of mail/Internet, telephone follow-up, and personal visit follow-up will be used to ensure an anticipated 95 percent response rate for the 2017-18 data collection². The first mailout (web invitation or paper questionnaire) will be followed by a reminder card (1 week later) and by a second mailout (paper questionnaire) to nonrespondents (1 month later). The second mailout will be followed by a reminder card (1 week later) and by a third mailout (paper questionnaire) with a letter from the appropriate private school association (if furnished) encouraging the school's participation. Five weeks after the second mailout, noninterview cases will be turned over to the CATI facility for telephone follow-up and, when necessary, to field staff for personal visit follow-up.

B3. Methods for Maximizing Response Rates

Although different types of private schools have different response rates, any method for increasing response rates would be applied to all types of private schools. Several procedures will be employed to ensure high response rates. The following elements of the data collection plan will contribute to the overall success of the survey.

1. Visible support from top-level federal education officials: Top-level education department officials addressed the representatives of a number of private school associations at an NCES-sponsored meeting that took place in October 2015. The officials demonstrated their support for the survey by informing the representatives of the timing and objectives of the survey and by soliciting the representatives' cooperation to ensure the survey's success.
2. Endorsements by private school associations: The 2015-16 PSS was endorsed by 21 private school associations.

¹ See appendices A and B for examples of letters used to request private school lists.

² The response rate for the 2013-14 PSS was 80.6 percent. The 2013-14 PSS was an atypical PSS collection due to the government shutdown in October 2013. The shutdown reduced the total amount of time the PSS was in the field and caused the questionnaire mailouts to occur at less than optimal times.

3. Interactive field monitoring with extensive follow-up (by telephone and personal visits) of nonrespondents: The survey will use mixed survey modes—mail/Internet, telephone, and personal interviews, as needed, to achieve high response levels in 2017-18. Past experience indicates that the majority of the school surveys will be completed by mail/Internet. Follow-up telephone or in-person interviews for the mail nonrespondents will be conducted to achieve an expected response rate of 95 percent. In the 2013-14 administration of PSS, we received 32.1% of responses by internet, with about 73% of responses by a self-administered mode in total (internet or mail).
4. The 2017-18 PSS will contain an experiment testing whether or not the size of the initial contact envelope has an effect on response rates for the schools eligible for the Internet option.
5. The second mailing of 2017-18 PSS will contain a letter from the appropriate private school association (if furnished) encouraging participation in the survey. This letter will be furnished by the private school association and will be addressed to the nonresponding schools.

In addition, the survey content is based upon administrative information that is commonly on file in private schools.

As part of the 2015-16 PSS data collection, NCES is testing whether or not using Census branding on the self-report mail-out materials increases response rates over using the conventional NCES branding. Preliminary results indicate that using the Census branding has no improvement on response rates. NCES plans to use the NCES branding in 2017-18 and beyond. The final results of the branding experiment will be available in June 2016.

B4. Test of Procedures and Methods

The survey questionnaire and procedures will be based on those used in the 2015-16 PSS. See Appendix D for the 2017-18 PSS questionnaire. Since no new items are to be included in the 2017-18 PSS questionnaire, there is no need to test the 2017-18 PSS survey items.

The schools eligible for the Internet option receive their first contact in a standard letter-size envelope. NCES plans to test whether or not some schools are not noticing the letter-size envelope by sending 5,000 of the Internet eligible schools (sorted on four groups – Catholic, other religious, nonsectarian, and unknown) their first contact in a large envelope. The rest of the Internet eligible schools will receive their first contact in the letter-size envelope that is currently being used in the 2015-16 PSS. Using 5,000 schools in the experimental group will allow for detecting a 2.6 percentage-point difference at the 5% level (power = 65%).

NCES will conduct an operation to test both our ability to harvest school e-mail addresses clerically from the Internet for about 2,000 private schools and the impact on response rates of sending web invitations to schools by e-mail. This will not involve any additional respondent burden. If successful, NCES would experiment with expanding e-mail contact in future PSS data collection activities.

B5. Statistical Consultants, Agency Staff, and Contractors

In addition to review within NCES, James Farber and Carolyn Pickering of the U.S. Census Bureau reviewed the PSS sample design and related matters for statistical quality, feasibility, and suitability to the overall objectives of the survey. The following individuals have oversight of the data collection and analysis:

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Part C. ITEM JUSTIFICATION

The questionnaire is designed to collect information concerning the number of private schools, teachers, students, and high school graduates. In addition, the questionnaire contains several screening items that are necessary to establish that schools are bona fide schools or educational programs offering kindergarten programs and not day care centers, preschools, and the like. See Appendix D for a copy of the 2013-14 PSS questionnaire.

Item 1 seeks information to identify the respondent.

Item 2 lists statements that will be used to screen out schools that are not private schools or do not serve students in grades K-12.

Item 3 gives instructions to the respondent.

Items 4 and 5 obtain information regarding the grades offered, enrollment by grade, and total enrollment. These questions will be used to determine the current grades taught in private schools and to classify sampled schools as elementary, secondary, or combined. The total enrollment (Item 5) and enrollment by grade (Item 4) will be used to estimate the total enrollment in private schools and the number of private school students by grade or grade span. This data will be used in the sample selection design for other school surveys.

Item 6 asks the racial/ethnic distribution of the student body. This is a basic school descriptor and an important policy-relevant measure of minority group composition in the school. This data will be used in the sample selection design for other school surveys.

Item 7 asks if a school is coeducational, all female, or all male and, if coeducational, how many male students attend the school. This is a basic school descriptor. This data will be used in the sample selection design for other school surveys.

Item 8 asks for the number of regular high school graduates during the 2012-13 academic year and the percent that went to 4-year colleges. This is a basic school descriptor and an important policy-relevant measure.

Item 9 asks schools to indicate the existence of a kindergarten program, and for those schools with a kindergarten program, whether it is a full- or half-day program and the number of days per week of the kindergarten program. The characteristics of kindergarten programs in private schools are important policy-relevant measures. This data will be used in the sample selection design for other school surveys.

Item 10 asks schools to indicate their number of full- and part-time teachers. This information will allow estimates of both the total number of private school teachers and the total number of full-time-equivalent teachers in private schools. This data will be used in the sample selection design for other school surveys.

Item 11 seeks information regarding school type. This information will be used as a classification variable in analysis.

Item 12 asks the extent to which private schools are supporting home schooling and whether the school is operated in a private home used as a family residence. This question will be used to determine the prevalence of schools in private residences and will also be used (in conjunction with Items 6 and 11) to screen out families that are homeschooling.

Items 13 and 14 ask schools to indicate whether they have a religious orientation and to indicate to what associations they belong. These data will be used to estimate the number of Catholic, other religious, and nonsectarian schools; and to determine if schools are members of school associations. The data will also be used as a classification variable in analysis and in the sample selection design for other school surveys.

Item 15 asks for the number of days in the school year for students. These data will be used to estimate the average length of the school year for students attending private schools.

Item 16 will obtain information about the length of the school day in private schools. These data will be used to estimate the average length of the school day for students attending private schools.

Item 17 asks schools to indicate the existence of a library/media center. This is a basic school descriptor and will be used in the sample selection design for other school surveys.

Item 18 will be used by NCES to study survey response patterns.

Item 19 will be used for updating the school name and address. This data will be used in sample surveys and future PSS collections.

Item 20 will obtain the physical or street address of the school, if different from the mailing address. This information will be used in assigning a geocode to the school location and for unduplication.

The 2015-16 PSS contained two former Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) items (number of students participating in title 1 and number of students approved for free and reduced price lunch). These items were included in the 2015-16 PSS only, because the inclusion of private schools in the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) was delayed until 2017-18. The current plan is that the 2017-18 NTPS will collect this information from private schools.