

**The School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS)  
Principals Focus Groups**

**Appendix A  
Principal Recruitment Materials and Moderator's Guide**

OMB #1850-0803 v.185

National Center for Education Statistics  
Institute of Education Sciences  
U.S. Department of Education  
Washington, D.C.

December 2016

## **School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS)**

### **Appendix A-1. Principal Focus Group Recruitment Call Script**

Hello, my name is <INTERVIEWER'S NAME> and I am calling on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a division of the U.S. Department of Education. May I please speak with <principal's name>?

We are recruiting potential participants for a paid focus group about how school administrators view participating in education studies. As the Department begins to prepare for the next, spring 2018, iteration of the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), we are interested in talking with school administrators about what they think about education studies like SSOCS so the data collection team can make the experience for schools as good as possible.

We are not selling anything. We are simply interested in hearing your thoughts about education studies because your school is the type of school we are interested in hearing from. Historically, NCES has struggled to get <insert school characteristics>, similar to your school, to complete the survey, and we would like to learn about the unique challenges or issues that face a school like yours when considering participation in a survey like SSOCS.

- suburban schools that serve a diverse student population
- large urban schools
- rural schools

**Your opinions are very important to us and to thank you for your time, we will give you \$75 as a token of our appreciation.**

We would like to meet via WebEx between <<TIME>> on <<DATE>> with other principals to discuss SSOCS. During the meeting, we will discuss your experiences with other studies you may have participated in and garner your advice. We also want to learn how we might better word our materials and discussions when approaching schools to participate.

NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 [*if requested: ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C., § 9543*]. Your participation is voluntary and your answers 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 (20 U.S. Code, § 9573).

Would you be willing and available to participate in a discussion about education surveys like SSOCS?

If YES, continue. If NO, thank and terminate.

**As I mentioned, we will give you \$75 as a token of our appreciation for your participation in this WebEx discussion.** The discussion will last approximately 90 minutes. Prior to the WebEx you will receive specific instructions for joining the call on <DATE> at 4:00 pm EST. You will also receive a packet via Federal Express containing the draft versions of materials for SSOCS. These will be discussed during the WebEx.

RESPONDENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

[VERIFY:]

SCHOOL NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE/EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you. Your Fed Ex package should arrive on [DATE = +2 days from call date]

[Message in case not available: Hello, I'm calling on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education. We are recruiting potential participants for a paid focus group about how school administrators view participating in education studies. Your opinions are very important to us and to thank you for your time, we will give you \$75 as a token of our appreciation. If you are interested, give us a call at < phone number > or email us at < >. Thank you. Goodbye.]

**School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS)**  
**Appendix A-2. Principal Focus Group Consent Form**

**CONSENT FORM**

**PARTICIPATION IN A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT**

**FOCUS GROUP PURPOSE**

A focus group will be held with elementary and secondary school principals about participation in voluntary education studies. The information obtained from this group will guide school recruitment strategies for the upcoming School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) in an effort to improve participation rates and collect valid data on education contexts across the U.S.

**AGENCY CONDUCTING THE STUDY**

This project is being conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which is part of the U.S. Department of Education. Representatives from Hager Sharp, an independent communications firm, will administer the focus group sessions.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C., § 9543). Your participation is voluntary and your answers 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 (20 U.S. Code, § 9573).

**QUESTIONS**

If you have any questions about the discussion group, please call Christina Nicols of Hager Sharp at 202-842-3600.

**CONSENT**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in this focus group.

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SIGNATURE

# **School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS)**

## **Appendix A-3. Moderator's Guide:**

### **Principals Focus Group**

#### Research Questions:

- What value do surveys have in education?
- What value does SSOCS have in education?
- Does the format of SSOCS influence principals' motivations to participate?
- What information do principals use when deciding whether or not to participate in a survey like SSOCS? Who do they consult?
- What barriers prevent or discourage participation in SSOCS?
  - What would minimize these barriers in the principal's school?
- What are the perceived benefits of participation for principals? How do the principals value SSOCS?
- What current or potential SSOCS messages or materials do principals find relevant, useful, and informative?
- What would be the most effective channels, formats, and materials to use to communicate with principals?
- What other groups (e.g., district, other administrators) would be central to the decision-making process and what would be the best way to reach those influencers?

#### **INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)**

My name is Christina Nicols and I work for Hager Sharp, an independent communications company, working on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which is a part of the U.S. Department of Education.

Today we are talking to you in a WebEx-based focus group. It allows us to talk with people in a bit more depth than when using other methods, such as surveys. We are looking to get your honest opinions. I will be asking questions, which are meant to generate discussion. There are no right or wrong answers. I encourage you to express your opinion even if it might be different from other participants. We want all types of viewpoints – positive, negative, and everything in between. We do not have to come to any consensus on what we talk about. Your individual opinion is important so I would like to hear from everyone. We will be audio recording the session so that I have a record of the discussion to write my report. Once the report is written we will destroy the recording.

Your feedback will be used only for statistical purposes and may not be used for any other purpose except as required by law. No names will appear in the summary report about what we learn through this focus group. If at any time you decide you do not want continue, that is your choice and you may stop. Before we begin, do you have any questions about what I just said?"

Draft materials will be presented along with other information, which you should have received in the mail. I want to point out that these are not materials that I have developed, so you will not flatter me or insult me by anything that you say. My job is to ensure that we cover everything that we need to cover and that I keep the discussion going. I have no stake in the outcome of the discussion.

Does everyone have available the packet of materials that you received? I'll let you know at what point you should reference the packet. If you do not have your packet, you should have electronic versions of the materials. [ALTERNATE: If you don't have your packet, that's OK. We will walk through these materials as a group and show them on the screen.]

Are there any questions about using the WebEx technology? [ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT WEBEX]

I'd like everyone to introduce themselves. Let me start (MODERATOR INTRO). Now, tell me about yourself. When you do, please be sure to tell me your name (first name is okay), a little bit about your school (size/grades), how long you've been in education, and anything else you'd like to tell us about yourself.

### **VALUE OF SCHOOL SURVEYS (5 MINUTES)**

- Let's start by talking broadly about education studies involving samples of primary or secondary schools, staff, and students. Are you aware of any surveys or studies like that? Do any studies come to mind?
- Have you ever participated in any of these kinds of studies? Do you know anyone whose school has participated?
- What is your overall reaction to such studies? What questions or concerns do you have about these studies?
- To whom are they valuable? In what ways are they necessary or unnecessary?

Let's say you were to participate in a study. What would be the most compelling reason in your view to do so?

### **BARRIERS TO SSOCS (10 MINUTES)**

- Let's talk more specifically about a study called the School Survey on Crime and Safety or SSOCS.
- Prior to receiving the materials we sent you, what, if anything, have you heard or do you know about SSOCS?
- For the following discussion, I'd like you to refer to the packet of information about SSOCS. Please open it up at this time. (PAUSE) If you don't have your packet, please refer to the electronic versions we provided to you. [ALTERNATE: If you don't have your packet, that's OK. We will walk through these materials as a group and show them on the screen.]
- This is the information you would receive if your school was asked to participate. The first thing I'd like you to do with it is glance through it as you usually would, identify the piece you would read first, and look it over.
- [GIVE PARTICIPANTS A MOMENT TO REVIEW PACKETS, THEN GO AROUND TO

EACH PRINCIPAL AND HAVE EACH ONE NAME THE PIECE THEY WOULD READ FIRST AND WHAT MADE THEM SELECT THAT PIECE.]

- At this point, what are your thoughts on SSOCS?
  - Is there anything that appeals to YOU about participating?
  - What are some potential drawbacks or issues regarding participation that you can identify?

PROBE:

- Maybe the time it takes to complete it, or the nature of the study?
- Please take a few minutes to look through the rest of the packet. Based on the materials that you read and anything else that you may know about SSOCS how would you react if your school was asked to participate in SSOCS?
  - What factors would you consider? Timing of the survey, time involved for you and your staff, incentives or lack thereof...
  - What questions would you have?
  - What specific information would you need or want in order to decide whether or not to participate (like confidentiality assurance, time to complete, sample procedures, status of district research application, if applicable, the questionnaire)?
  - How would the decision be made to participate or not? For example, who would be involved in the decision? (District personnel, other school leadership like assistant principals and department heads...)
  - What would be the best way to reach them? By phone, email, in-person visit?
  - Would the support—or resistance—of any particular person or group be particularly critical in the decision to participate? Whose? (District officials? Principal colleagues? Teachers? Parents? School Boards?)

## **BARRIERS TO —ADMINISTERING SSOCS (20 MINUTES)**

- Let's take a few minutes to talk about what it would be like to administer SSOCS in your school. [BRIEFLY—use as a way to introduce details about SSOCS]

SSOCS is a survey of elementary and secondary school principals that focuses on school safety, including the frequency of school crime and violence, disciplinary actions, and school practices related to the prevention and reduction of crime. SSOCS is administered through a paper questionnaire, which participants receive through FedEx. Participants receive a prepaid return FedEx envelope for sending in the completed questionnaire. It takes approximately one hour to complete the questionnaire.

- Participation is voluntary.
  - Based on the description of the survey, are there any challenges or burdens you would anticipate in the administration of the survey?
- In your packets, we have included a sample questionnaire for the SSOCS survey. Let's talk specifically about the sample survey questionnaire:
  - Does the sample survey form seem straightforward to you?
  - Do you think you would have any difficulties in filling it out? [If yes, what are some of the

difficulties you foresee?]

- o How long do you think it would take you to fill out the questionnaire?
- o Would you be more inclined to participate if it was available online?
- How likely would your school be to participate in SSOCS if you were selected in the sample?  
NOTE: You are not being asked to participate. Nothing you say in this group will commit you to participating. We want to gauge your reaction to the concept of participating in SSOCS.

**[FOR USE ONLY WITH PARTICIPANTS WHO RESPONDED NEGATIVELY]**

- Is there anything that may change your mind about participating in SSOCS?
  - o Would something about your school need to change? What?
  - o Would something about the survey need to change? What? (PROBE FOR timing, access, time required, etc.)
- If *one* thing could change about SSOCS, what would be most important to increase the likelihood that you would participate?
- Of the other studies your school participates in:
  - o Which is the easiest? What makes it easy?
  - o Which is the most difficult? What makes it difficult?
- Are there any other barriers that you see to participating in SSOCS? Are there any other concerns or negative reactions that you have?

**BENEFITS OF SSOCS (5 MINUTES)**

- Let's talk a little more about the benefits to participating in SSOCS. What do you think would be the benefits of having your school participate in SSOCS? (PROBE FOR benefits to staff, students, community)
- Which of these benefits is most important to you?

**REACTIONS TO SSOCS RECRUITMENT MATERIALS (20 MINUTES)**

- Let's turn back to the materials. Have you had an opportunity to review the materials for SSOCS? (GIVE MORE TIME TO LOOK THROUGH IF NEEDED)
- What was your overall reaction to the packet of materials? Let's start with <Name> and have everyone give me one statement about their reaction to the materials.
- Let's talk about [PULL UP ON WEBEX SCREEN/NAME A MATERIAL MENTIONED; REPEAT SEQUENCE FOR EACH MATERIAL MENTIONED. NOTE THAT A SIMILAR LETTER IS SENT TO SAMPLED PRINCIPALS ABOUT ONE WEEK BEFORE THESE MATERIALS]

**ORDER:** Letter from Commissioner, SSOCS Brochure

- o What made it useful?

- o What did you like about it?
  - o What didn't you like?
  - o Was anything confusing or hard to understand?
  - o Was anything missing?
  - o How believable was this information?
  - o How relevant was the information to you? Did it speak to you (as opposed to someone in a different position or role)?
  - o What did you think about the length?
  - o How does this compare to the information that you receive on other types of studies?
- What would you change?
  - Specifically regarding the brochure, would it be helpful to include details such as time estimates for completing the questionnaire and information tailored to the type of school (for example, a large, urban school)?
    - o Would this level of detail in the brochure make it more likely that you would participate in the survey?
  - We've been talking about what materials you found useful. Were there any materials in this packet that were unnecessary? Which ones? What made them unnecessary?

## **RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION (10 MINUTES)**

- This packet represents one way to communicate about SSOCS with principals like you.
- Where does a packet of materials rank on the list of best ways to communicate with you?
- What would work better or be preferable to you? PROBE:
  - o Telephone call—from whom?
  - o Email? (For example, we send an email to principals prior to receiving the SSOCS packet and we also send reminder emails. Do you think receiving these types of emails is helpful?)
  - o A personal visit?
- How helpful would it be to receive multimedia materials? PROBE:
  - o What about a short video that provides an overview of SSOCS? How would you feel about it in addition to, or instead of, these materials?
  - o Do you consult with staff before or while completing similar surveys? If so, would a pre-designed PowerPoint presentation to use in a meeting with your staff help them understand their role in SSOCS and what they are being asked to do? [if applicable, for example, a presentation when principals consult staff to answer questions on school climate or incident counts]
- In what format would you prefer to receive materials? Hard copy? Electronic? Both?
 

If hard copy, how many sets of materials would be useful for you? What is the best way to send materials so that they don't get misplaced or tossed? Should they be addressed to someone else in a specific role?
- Would any additional resources be helpful for encouraging participation among principals?

- Where do you get information about what's happening in education? About what's happening in your school system?
- Where would you go to get additional information about SSOCS?

## **CONCLUSIONS**

- Do you have any additional comments about these materials, SSOCS, or surveys in general?
- Thank you.