

MEMORANDUM

OMB # 1850-0923 v.3

DATE: April 8, 2016

TO: Robert Sivinski
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget

FROM: Isaiah O'Rear
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THROUGH: Kashka Kubzdela
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SUBJECT: ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) Benchmark Study 2017 Change Request

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) revised the EDSCLS 2016 data collection (OMB# 1850-0923 v.1 and 2) materials to reflect necessary changes to the EDSCLS benchmark data collection. During EDSCLS 2016 recruitment, NCES encountered a low school response rate that made it difficult to reach the 500 school benchmark sample. Data collection began in January 2016 and by February 2016 only 45 schools out of the necessary 500 had agreed to participate. This led us to halt collection and review options to successfully re-field the study in 2017.

Most schools and districts that declined to participate said the burden was too high and/or that they did not have enough time in their schedule to conduct the survey. Many special handling districts also had a long review period that made it difficult to secure approval and conduct the survey before data collection ended. The proposed here revisions for the EDSCLS 2017 national benchmark provide more time for working with special handling districts and no longer include the parent questionnaire.

With these revisions, EDSCLS has an updated schedule that delays data collection by one year to 2017. NCES will send the first recruitment materials in April of 2016 to give schools and districts time to consider the survey and add potential data collection dates into their calendars well in advance. This strategy is based on recent experience with the 2015-2016 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS). As of April 5, 2016 the NTPS school questionnaire response rate is 68% and is on track for a 70% school questionnaire response rate. NTPS began to contact special districts in January 2015 in order to start data collection in August 2015. By starting contact procedures with special districts in April, NCES would have a similar 8 month lead time window as NTPS, and would be able to start the request in advance of the anticipated school year, also as in NTPS.

Lastly, NCES decided not to include the parent survey in the national benchmark because of low interest among schools in fielding it and because of low response rates among schools that did administer the parent questionnaire during the pilot test.

The following revisions were made to the EDSCLS clearance package materials:

1. Updated Part A, Part B, and Appendix A to reflect that the new EDSCLS platform has been released and to update the benchmark study timeline to delaying it by one year. The new anticipated schedule is:

April-December, 2016: Research applications to special handling districts and recruitment of sampled schools.

January-May, 2017: National benchmark data collection from 500 schools.

Fall, 2017: A revised school climate platform with national benchmark reporting available for download; a report with national benchmark results.

2. Per the approved plan in the original package (OMB# 1850-0923 v.1-2), where we stated that “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” NCES decided not to conduct a parent survey after a lack of interest from schools due to challenges of administering a parent survey and low response rates from parents in schools that did administer the parent survey during the pilot study. Therefore, schools will not be asked to conduct a parent survey as part of the benchmarking study.

We have removed references to conducting a parent survey as part of the benchmark study in Supporting Statements Parts A and B and Appendices A and C. Removed parent survey items from Part C and Appendix B. Removed parent survey platform instructions from Appendix C. Removed the estimated burden for the parent survey from Part A.

3. Added description of procedures for applying for research permits from special handling districts in Supporting Statements Parts A and B. Also added burden for special handling district applications and follow up contact efforts in Part A.
4. In Appendix A, added advance letters for schools and special handling districts and a recruitment letter for special handling districts. Removed language about conducting universe survey. Updated the Survey Submission Rate Report.

Removing the parent survey (see bullet points 2 and 4), adding special district recruitment, and adjusting estimates on school follow-up efforts, resulted in a net estimated burden decrease of 21,592 hours.

The total cost of the EDSCLS National Benchmark Study data collection to the government has increased to approximately \$1.3 million from the previous total cost of \$992,416. The increase in the cost includes additional recruitment efforts for special districts, increased recruitment efforts (two more rounds of phone contact and sending field staff to schools proximate to AIR), and keeping staff on the recruitment team for a longer period of time to respond to questions from schools and districts (an increase from three months planned in 2016 to eight months planned for 2017).