

MEMORANDUM

OMB # 1850-0923 v.5

DATE: July 2016

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

FROM: Isaiah O'Rear
National Center for Education Statistics

THROUGH: Kashka Kubzdela
National Center for Education Statistics

SUBJECT: ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) Benchmark Study 2017 Recruitment and Schedule Change Request (83C)

In May 2016, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) received approval for a revised EDSCLS 2017 Benchmark data collection (OMB# 1850-0923 v.4) plan and materials, allowing NCES to implement two more measures to address a potential low response rate that may make it difficult to reach the target 500 school benchmark sample: (1) provide sample schools with the option to administer the EDSCLS to a sample rather than a universe of their staff and grade 5-12 students; and (2) conduct a small nonresponse follow-up study of sampled schools from the EDSCLS 2016 to gain additional information regarding the reasons schools had or had not selected to participate in the survey (EDSCLS 2016 Nonresponse Follow-up Study). Based on recruitment efforts from April 2016 through June 2016 and information from the EDSCLS 2016 Nonresponse Follow-up Study, NCES is requesting modifications to the recruitment schedule and a widening of the data collection window from January – May 2017 to December 2016 – June 2017.

Modifications to the Recruitment Approach

The current recruitment schedule includes up to four rounds of mailers, emails, and calls (OMB Part B, Section B.2.1). NCES started the first round of recruitment in April 2016. All 1,000 schools received the initial recruitment package, after which time, initial email, phone call, and all subsequent rounds of contact efforts have been limited to the prioritized batch of 714 schools (per OMB, Section B.2.5). If by the end of September, the team does not expect to recruit a minimum of 500 schools from the primary batch of 714, follow-up recruitment efforts with the remaining 286 schools will recommence. At the end of the first round of recruitment (April 2016 through June 2016), a total of 88 schools agreed to participate. This is well below the level of response needed at that point in order to eventually get to the 500 sample goal.

The EDSCLS 2016 Nonresponse Follow-up Study, yielded 22 interviews, including eight schools that had never responded to any communications during the 2016 Benchmark Study recruitment effort, nine that refused and five that agreed to do the survey. The respondents in the EDSCLS 2016 Nonresponse Follow-up Study who were at those schools that either never responded to any communications or refused to participate (17 schools) were asked to provide information on when would be a good time to recruit. Of the eight respondents that answered that question, seven said that the request should come between mid-June and early September. This is a time potentially when school staff is in the school offices while students are not in session. The potential to contact principals in July and August is in keeping with most principals working year-round (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016¹).

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2016-17 Edition, Elementary, Middle, and High School Principals, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/management/elementary-middle-and-high-school-principals.htm> (visited June 28, 2016).

Based on the relatively low number of schools agreeing to participate after the first round of collection (n=88) and on the feedback from the EDSCS 2016 Nonresponse Follow-up Study, NCES proposes:

- recommencing follow-up recruitment efforts with the remaining 286 schools in late July 2016, as opposed to making this decision in September, and
- beginning the second round of recruitment by sending physical mailers in late July 2016 to all schools that have not agreed to participate or refused, which was originally proposed to begin in September 2016. Then, beginning the third round in October rather than November 2016 and the optional fourth round of recruitment in December 2016.

Widening of the Data Collection Window

NCES also requests widening the planned data collection window. During the first round of recruitments, in making a decision toward participation, schools inquired whether data collection could occur in December 2016. Furthermore, schools in the 2016 Benchmark Study opted to conduct the data collection in June. In order to provide schools the flexibility to work around their testing schedule, NCES proposes extending the data collection window from the originally proposed January–May 2017 to December 2016–June 2017.

To reflect these requested changes, the following revisions were made to the EDSCS clearance package materials, which are included in this submission:

1. Part A:
 - a. Updated response burden estimates to include follow-up contacts with all 1,000 schools instead of 714 schools and to include 30 more special handling districts (Part A, Section A.12).
 - b. Updated the reasons for changes to response burden and to the cost to federal government for the benchmark study (Part A, Section A.15).
 - c. Changed the national benchmark data collection window from January – May 2017 to December 2016 – June 2017 (Part A, Section A.16).
2. Part B:
 - a. Added an update on the expected response rate and the decision to follow up with all 1,000 schools (Part B, B.1.2).
 - b. Changed the schedule of the remaining rounds of recruitment efforts moving the second round of recruitment from beginning in September 2016 to beginning in late July 2016; the third round from starting in November 2016 to starting in October 2016; and beginning the optional fourth round of recruitment in December 2016 (Part B, Section B.2.5).
 - c. Updated the number of special handling districts with the current number and the range of processing fees required by some of the districts (Part B, Section B.2.10).
 - d. Deleted the advance letter to special districts which intends to inform the districts that an application for research will arrive within the week, because many applications were completed online (Part B, Section B.2.1).
 - e. Where appropriate, changed the future tense to past tense for activities throughout Part B.
3. Appendix A:
 - a. Updated the national benchmark data collection window from January–May 2017 to December 2016–June 2017 in letters and frequently asked questions.