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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 Change Request (83C)

In May and July 2016, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) received the latest approvals for a revised EDSCLS 2017 Benchmark data collection (OMB# 1850-0923 v.4-5), allowing NCES to implement added measures to address a low response rate that makes reaching the target 500 school benchmark sample difficult. These measures included: (1) active recruitment of all sample schools beginning in July 2016; (2) widening the data collection window to December 2016 – June 2017; (3) providing sample schools with the option to administer EDSCLS to a sample rather than a universe of their staff and grade 5-12 students; and (4) conducting a small nonresponse follow-up study of sampled schools to learn why schools had or had not selected to participate in EDSCLS 2016.

The initial EDSCLS 2016 study design supported separate estimates of students' perceptions of school climate by student grade level, 5th through 12th. Therefore in recruiting schools, EDSCLS has sought participation of students from up to four of all eligible grades. For example, if a schools offers 6th, 7th, and 8th grade, EDSCLS has sought participation from students in all three grade levels. And, if a school offers 5th through 12th, EDSCLS has sought participation from students in four random grade levels.

As of August 26, 2016 the EDSCLS national benchmark study has recruited 125 schools, and gaining cooperation from an additional 375 schools is going to be challenging. During recruitment, a prevalent reason for school refusal is burden and loss of instructional time. In keeping with the original study design, schools would still have the option of the universe participation, where all students from all eligible grades (5th through 12th) within the school can participate, and where this option offers the incentive of the school receiving a customized school specific report presenting information on that schools' students' perceptions of school climate.

However, to address schools' concerns about burden and loss of instructional time, EDSCLS would also like to offer an alternative option of only one referent grades participating. Specifically, 5th grade will be the referent primary school grade, 7th grade the referent middle school grade, and 11th grade the referent high school grade. This alternative option will support refusal conversation (schools can be re-contacted with the referent grade option), and will protect against backsliders (schools that agreed to participate in the universe collection but may find that too time intensive once implementation is closer at hand).

Accordingly, the following revisions were made to the approved EDSCLS clearance package materials:

1. Part A:
   a. Section A.12, Paragraph 2. Updated to describe the assumptions around including an option of a referent grade collection.
   b. Section A.12, Table 1. Updated "Participation" numbers and burden estimates to reflect option of referent grade collection. We updated the low range of the numbers. We did not update the high range of the numbers, which are the numbers that feed into the total request burden. NCES kept those estimates the same to reflect the maximum possible respondent burden in the event that 700 schools opt to participate and all schools select to survey all of their grade 5-12 students and staff.

2. Part B:
   a. Section B.1.2, Paragraph 4. Updated text to include referent grade option.
   b. Section B.1.5. Updated text to refer directly to referent grade scenario.
3. Appendix A:
   a. Follow-Up Letter/Email for Schools for the EDSCLS 2017 National Benchmark Study, Page 8. Updated paragraph 3 to reflect referent grade option.
   b. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), Page 12. Updated "Important Note" to reflect referent grade option.