

**National Teacher and Principal Survey of 2019-2020 (NTPS 2019-20)
Teacher Focus Groups**

**Volume I
Supporting Statement**

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1. Submittal-Related Information

This material is being submitted under the generic National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) clearance agreement (OMB #1850-0803), which allows NCES to conduct procedures to develop, test, and improve its data collection methodologies (e.g., cognitive interviews, focus groups, feasibility testing, etc.).

2. Background and Study Rationale

The National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), is a system of related questionnaires that provides descriptive data on the context of elementary and secondary education while also giving policymakers a variety of statistics on the condition of education in the United States. Redesigned from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) with a focus on flexibility, timeliness, and integration with other ED data, the NTPS system allows for school, principal, and teacher characteristics to be analyzed in relation to one another. NTPS is an in-depth, nationally representative, large sample survey of first through twelfth grade public and private school teachers, principals, and schools. Kindergarten teachers in schools with at least a first grade are also surveyed. NTPS utilizes core content and a series of rotating modules to allow timely collection of important education trends as well as trend analysis. Topics covered include characteristics of teachers, principals, schools, working conditions, teacher training opportunities, retention, retirement, hiring, and shortages.

NTPS is conducted every two years, starting in the 2015–2016 school year, and will be conducted next during the 2019–2020 school year. NCES conducted its predecessor, SASS, from 1987 to 2011. NTPS consists of four questionnaires:

- A teacher listing form to obtain a list of teachers from each school. To reduce burden, a sample of teachers is selected from this list of all teachers at the school.
- A school questionnaire that obtains information on school characteristics.
- A principal questionnaire that collects information on the principal.
- A teacher questionnaire that collects information on the sampled teacher.

In the NTPS 2015–2016 collection, the overall response rate for teacher questionnaires fell below NCES' needed response rate of 50% for teachers in city schools. NCES hopes to improve upon this response rate for the 2019–2020 collection by better understanding the factors that motivate teachers to complete (or decline to complete) the NTPS teacher questionnaire for city teachers and other teacher subgroups with relatively low response rates, such as teachers in charter schools.

This request is to conduct focus groups with teachers in public charter schools and urban schools (both public charter and traditional public schools in cities) to: (a) better understand both barriers and benefits teachers associate with participation in surveys like NTPS; (b) identify communication strategies that will aid recruitment and help teachers overcome barriers to participation; and (c) determine if and how messages should be customized for teachers in different school settings. This information will guide recruitment strategies and materials development for NTPS 2019–20.

3. Design and Recruitment

We will conduct six online focus groups and two in-person focus groups with primary and secondary school teachers from four different states and districts in traditional public schools and public charter schools, to understand their perceptions of the study and how they would respond if selected for NTPS. We will work with two recruitment vendors to select a randomized sample of teachers and ensure diversity of geography, level (e.g., elementary, secondary), size, and the percentage of students eligible for the National School Lunch Program. Section 3.2 contains more information about the recruitment strategy. The configuration of the focus groups is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Proposed Configuration of Focus Groups among Teachers for the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS)

State/District	Public Charter vs. Traditional Public Schools	Online vs. In-Person Groups
New York (focus on urban areas, including NYC)	Public Charter	Online
	Traditional Public	Online
California (focus on urban areas, including San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Sacramento)	Public Charter	Online
	Traditional Public	Online
Texas (focus on urban areas, including Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, and Austin)	Public Charter	Online
	Traditional Public	Online
Washington, DC (facility in Bethesda, MD)	Public Charter	In-person
	Traditional Public	In-person

3.1 Research Questions

Key research questions to be explored in the focus groups include:

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

Using the suggestions and information collected from these focus groups, we will incorporate the teachers’ feedback into the development of materials and strategies for engaging schools in NTPS recruitment in 2019 and beyond. The following materials, which are proposed for use in NTPS, will be presented to participating teachers prior to and during their focus group to elicit feedback and suggestions (see Appendix B for copies of all materials).

Materials for teachers’ review (to be discussed during the focus groups):

- Initial Teacher Contact Letter and Email (Appendix B)
- Contact Envelope (Appendix B)
- List of Teacher Statistics (Appendix B)
- Letter of Better Understanding (Appendix B)
- NTPS sample teacher survey (Appendix C)

3.2 Procedures

Hager Sharp will work with an education-sector recruitment vendor to recruit participants for the online focus groups. Shugoll Research in Bethesda, MD, will serve as the research facility and recruitment vendor for the two in-person focus groups. The recruitment vendors will work from an approved screening questionnaire (Appendix A) and will distribute and gather consent forms (Appendix A). Recruited participants for the online focus groups will be sent information in advance to enable them to dial in to the

groups. They will be shown materials through an online platform, and a trained Hager Sharp researcher working from a moderator's guide (see Appendix A) will facilitate discussion in each focus group. Recruited participants for the in-person groups will be shown materials during the groups, which will be facilitated by a trained Hager Sharp researcher working from a moderator's guide (see Appendix A).

To the extent possible, participants will be from schools with characteristics that are correlated with lower participation: public charter schools, and both traditional public and public charter schools in urban cities. We will recruit 10 teachers for each focus group session—a number that allows for in-depth collection of information and buy-in from this respondent group. Topics of the discussion will focus on identifying the benefits teachers associate with NTPS participation, the barriers they perceive to participating in a study like NTPS, which NTPS recruitment strategies and advance materials they believe would be most and least useful, and their suggestions for other types of recruitment strategies or materials. The focus group sessions will last approximately one hour and 15 minutes.

3.3 Session Activities

During the online and in-person focus groups, a moderator will lead the participating teachers through a discussion (via an online platform for the online focus groups), and up to three Hager Sharp team members will observe and take notes on the participants' comments and suggestions, which they will later compile into a summary report. The sessions will also be audio recorded. The recordings will be destroyed as soon as the report is finalized, and no personally identifiable information will be included in the report.

3.4 Analysis Plans

The report of the focus groups will describe the methodology, participants' responses to the research questions outlined above, recommendations, and suggestions for next steps in order to inform potential revisions to NTPS recruitment materials and strategies to more effectively recruit schools and teachers for participation in the survey.

4. Consultations outside NCES

Consultations outside NCES include a contractor with expertise in designing and administering focus groups, who will also take part in administering the study: Christina Nicols, MPH, MS, MS, Senior Vice President and Director of Planning, Research and Evaluation at Hager Sharp (1030 15th Street NW, Suite 600E, Washington, DC 20005).

5. Assurances of Confidentiality

All contractor staff working on the NTPS focus groups will sign the NCES Affidavit of Nondisclosure. Personal information of potential participants (e.g., name, address) will be collected for recruitment purposes only. On the data file used for analyses, respondents will be identified only by a unique study ID number assigned to each participant. Within 48 hours of respondents' participation in the focus groups, the discussion notes will be edited, organized, and cleaned, and all identifiers will be stripped from the data set. All computer files will be password-protected and hard copies will be locked in secure locations (e.g., data will be in locked file cabinets within locked offices). Only contract staff working directly on the data analysis portion of the project will have access to the data files. Once the report is finalized, all personally identifiable information will be destroyed. No individual names will be included in the reports.

The statement below will be presented in all written materials (e.g., letters, emails) and read at the start of the focus group sessions. Participants will also be informed that they can leave the discussion at any time.

NCES is authorized to conduct this study by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543). Your participation is voluntary and all of the information you provide 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.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151).

6. Estimates of Burden

Recruitment of teachers is estimated to take up to five (5) minutes per teacher, and we anticipate needing to

contact up to 240 teachers to form the desired focus groups of a total of 80 diverse participants. The focus groups will take approximately 75 minutes to conduct, and we have included an additional 45 minutes in the burden estimate for participants to dial into the groups or get situated in the room and review and sign the consent form. There is no cost to participants beyond the participation burden time. Table 2 provides the burden estimate for this study.

Table 2. Burden estimates for NTPS teacher focus groups

Respondent group	Hours per respondent	Number of respondents	Number of responses	Total burden hours
Teacher – Recruitment	0.083	240	240	20
Teacher – Discussions	2	80*	80	160
Total Burden		240	320	180

*Subset of initial contact group, not double counted in the total number of respondents.

7. Payments to Respondents

During recruitment, teachers asked to participate in the online focus groups will be offered a \$75 incentive and teachers asked to participate in the in-person focus groups will be offered a \$125 incentive. A monetary incentive is deemed necessary both to thank participants for their time and effort and to encourage select types of teachers to take part in the focus groups, so that the sample can be as representative as possible of the types of teachers that tend to decline participation in NTPS, a group by definition reluctant to partake in studies.

Given the experienced inability to recruit the needed subgroup of teachers in Washington, DC for in-person interviews, the \$125 incentive is needed to realize the in-person focus groups and constitutes the minimum amount for local recruitment firms to accept the assignment as they deem this amount to be the minimum necessary to be able to recruit teachers that tend to decline participation in studies.

8. Estimate of Cost to Federal Government

The estimated cost to prepare for, administer, and report the results of the NTPS focus groups is approximately \$55,000. This cost includes salaried labor for contractor staff and other direct costs associated with organization of the sessions.

9. Schedule

The schedule of activities for the NTPS teacher focus groups is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Schedule of activities for the NTPS teacher focus groups*

Activity	Tasks	Date ranges
Data collection	Recruit participants	July – September 2018
	Online and in-person focus groups	August – September 2018
Analysis	Produce Report	By Late September 2018