

Public Comments Received During the 30-day Comment Period and NCES Responses

March 2020

National Teacher and Principal Survey of 2020-2021 (NTPS 2020-21)

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The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) are writing to respond to the U.S. Department of Education’s (the Department) request for comments on the National Teacher and Principal Survey of 2020-21 (NTPS 2020–21). We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the importance of this data collection and recommend ways to improve upon the utility of the data collected.

NASSP is the leading organization and voice for secondary school principals, assistant principals, and school leaders from across the United States and in over 35 countries around the world. Founded in 1916, our vision is great leaders in every school committed to the success of each student. NASSP also promotes the intellectual growth, academic achievement, character and leadership development, and physical well-being of youth. We are proud to have founded and continue to administer the National Honor Societies and National Student Council. LPI conducts and communicates independent, high-quality research to improve education policy and practice. Working with policymakers, researchers, educators, community groups, and others, LPI seeks to advance evidence-based policies that support empowering and equitable learning for each and every child. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, LPI connects policymakers and stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels with the evidence, ideas, and actions needed to strengthen the education system from preschool through college and career readiness.

Research has indicated that effective school leadership is second only to direct classroom instruction as a factor in raising student achievement. Given the unique role that principals play in ensuring that our nation’s students have a high-quality learning experience through high school in order to be college and career ready, it is important to maintain the data collection. Further, to better inform policy decisions, it would be useful to include three additional questions related to principal preparation and professional development. Therefore, we ask the Department to consider the following recommendations:

(1) Recommendation: Maintain the data collection for the National Teacher and Principal Surveys and their respective follow-up surveys. These are required by law and provide useful information to policymakers, including the Department, researchers, and practitioners.

The data collection and reporting are required by law under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543). The purpose of the National Teacher and Principal Survey is to provide policymakers and researchers with relevant and timely data on the characteristics and conditions of America’s public, charter, and private K–12 schools and the professionals who work in them. The data are used by Congress, the U.S. Department of Education, state education agencies, public school districts, and education research organizations to: 1) evaluate the affects of school workplace conditions, salaries, and training opportunities on the educational workforce; 2) assess school staffing practices and personnel policies; and 3) aid in the Department of Education’s program planning in the areas of teacher shortage, teaching policies, and teacher education.

For example, NASSP used results from the 2015–16 National Teacher and Principal Survey in the development of our position statement on Educator Diversity, which was adopted by the NASSP Board of Directors in March 2019. The data showed that only 20 percent of public school teachers and 22 percent of public school principals

identified as individuals of color compared to 47 percent of public school students nationwide who identified as individuals of color, which means that many students are taught and led by educators who do not share similar backgrounds or experiences. The policy recommendations in the position statement will be used by NASSP to seek to strengthen teacher and principal preparation programs, including those at minority-serving institutions of higher education.

The collection of the data is also supported by the organizations representing those who participate in the survey or facilitate its completion. These include NASSP, AASA: the School Superintendents Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Association for Middle Level Education. These organizations do not find the survey burdensome, annually endorsing the National Teacher and Principal Survey and encouraging members to respond to the questionnaire. The First Look document published by the National Center for Education Statistics in August 2019 found that the weighted unit response rate was 70.2 percent for public school principals.

(2) Recommendation: To enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information collected, expand the data collection specific to principals and their preparation and professional development, which is significantly underrepresented compared to the information offered on the teacher survey.

Currently, the Department collects information on the highest degree earned by principals, the school positions held before becoming a principal, and participation in district or school training or development programs for aspiring school principals. However, data on the preparatory experiences and professional development needs are not included. This information would be helpful for policymakers as they update and revise principal certification and licensure requirements and make professional development decisions.

In 2017, a research review by LPI outlined key features of effective principal preparation and professional development programs that enabled principals to improve student and school outcomes:

- Close collaboration between programs and school districts
- Purposeful and targeted recruitment
- Cohorts of principal candidates
- Networks of practicing principals
- Problem-based learning opportunities
- Field-based internships and coaching by an expert
- Strong focus on improving schoolwide instruction
- Attention to creating collegial organizations
- Using data for change

The extent to which principals have been provided with these opportunities is important information for policymakers and practitioners. For example, NASSP will use the additional data from these questions to inform our conversations with policymakers regarding Title II, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act and how those funds could be targeted. The law provided new opportunities for states to use Title II, Part A funds to invest in principal leadership and support and job-embedded professional learning opportunities for teachers—all evidence-based strategies that will lead to improved student outcomes. Many states have already taken advantage of the optional three percent set aside of Title II, Part A funds for school leadership activities. Many states also report that Title II, Part A funds make possible the majority of their professional learning activities for teachers.

We recommend the survey include the following questions to assess the type of preparatory experiences school leaders received and areas of professional development they would find the most useful for improving their

practice:

Question 1: *As part of your leadership preparation program, did you have a supervised internship or field experience working directly with a principal and engaging in administrative tasks under supervision?*

Response Options:

1. Yes or No

2. If “Yes”: How long was your supervised internship or field experience?

- 1–2 months
- 3–5 months
- 6–8 months
- 9–12 months
- More than 12 months

Question 2: *Not counting the training you may have received in a leadership preparation program, have you participated in professional development workshops, conferences, or courses in the past two years in any of the following areas?*

Response Options: (check all that apply):

- Individual or collaborative research on a topic of interest to you professionally.
- Mentoring or coaching by an experienced principal, as part of a formal arrangement that is supported by the school or district.
- Peer observation/coaching in which you have an opportunity to visit with other principals for sharing practice.
- Participating in a principal network (e.g., a group of principals organized by your district, an outside agency, or online).
- Reading professional books or articles.
- Participating in professional development courses or workshops.

Question 3: *In what areas would you like to have opportunities for additional professional learning?*

Response Options: (check all that apply):

- Leading instruction that focuses on how to develop students’ higher order thinking skills.
- Leading instruction that focuses on raising schoolwide achievement on standardized tests.
- Selecting effective curriculum strategies and materials.
- Leading instruction that supports implementation of new state standards.
- Using student and school data to inform continuous school improvement.
- Leading a schoolwide change process to improve student achievement.
- Engaging in self-improvement and your own continuous learning.
- Creating collegial and collaborative work environments.
- Working with the school community, parents, educators, and other stakeholders.
- Leading schools that support students from diverse ethnic, racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds.
- Leading schools that support students’ social and emotional development.
- Developing systems that meet children’s needs and support their development in terms of physical and mental health.
- Creating a school environment that develops personally and socially responsible young people

and uses discipline for restorative purposes.

- Redesigning the school’s organization and structure to support deeper learning for teachers and students.
- Designing professional learning opportunities for teachers and other staff.
- Helping teachers improve through a cycle of observation and feedback.
- Recruiting and retaining teachers and other staff.
- Managing school operations efficiently.
- Knowing how to invest resources to support improvements in school performance.
- Meeting the needs of English learners.
- Meeting the needs of students with disabilities.
- Equitably serving all children.

Finally, to help inform policies and efforts to support states and districts experiencing principal shortages, we recommend the survey include a follow-up question to assess why principals are leaving their position. There are currently a set of questions asking principals whether they plan on remaining at their school and if not, where they are going. However, these questions do not address why they are leaving. To better understand the factors contributing to principal turnover and inform efforts to address turnover, we recommend including the following follow-up question:

Question: *If you plan on leaving your school next year, what factors most contributed to that decision?*

Response Options (check all that apply):

- Salary
- Working conditions
- Lack of decision-making authority
- Lack of support from central office
- Accountability pressures
- Stress/long hours
- Other

NASSP and LPI appreciate the Department’s consideration of these recommendations for maintaining and improving the National Teacher and Principal Survey and we look forward to working with the Department to support additional data collection. Should you have any questions about the comments, please contact Amanda Karhuse, NASSP Director of Advocacy, at karehusea@nassp.org or Jessica Cardichon, LPI Director of Federal Policy, at jcardichon@learningpolicyinstitute.com.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

JoAnn D. Bartoletti, Executive Director

Linda Darling-Hammond, President and CEO

Dear Ms. Bartoletti, Darling-Hammond, and Karhuse,

Thank you for your feedback posted on March 4, 2020 responding to a 30-day request for comments on the proposed National Teacher and Principal Survey of 2020-21 (NTPS 2020-21). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) appreciates your continued interest in the NTPS survey. I have provided a response to each of your comments below.

1. We continue to find your support for this program gratifying and are pleased to see your report that our target populations do not find the data collection particularly burdensome. NCES plans to continue collection of the NTPS. NCES publications that feature data from the 2017-18 NTPS are available by selecting “Publications & Products” on the project website (<https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/>), and First Look reports with the results of the 2017-18 NTPS principal and school collections are currently available on the project website. Please note that the findings from the 2017-18 NTPS principal collection include information about participation in professional development activities by school characteristics for public and private schools (https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/ntps1718_2019082208_a12n.asp), the state in which public schools are located (https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/ntps1718_19110508_a1s.asp), and private school affiliation (https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/ntps1718_19110508_a2a.asp).
2. The NTPS was designed to include both core questions (asked of respondents every survey administration) and rotating questions (asked of respondents every other administration). The 2017-18 NTPS Principal and Teacher Questionnaires featured rotating modules on professional development. Principals were asked about the professional development they received during the previous school year (section 7 of https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/pdf/1718/Principal_Questionnaire_2017-18.pdf), including types and topic areas of professional development. In addition, principals were asked about the professional development provided to teachers at their school (section 5 of https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/pdf/1718/Principal_Questionnaire_2017-18.pdf), including principals’ perceptions of time, resources, and applicability of teachers’ professional development, days and times at which professional development was available to teachers during the previous 12 months, and teacher input into professional development activities. Finally, teachers were asked about professional development (section 6 of https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/pdf/1718/Teacher_Questionnaire_2017-18.pdf), including how frequently they participated in different professional development, how many hours they participated in different types of professional development, the relevance of the professional development they received, time and support for professional development, and their perceptions of resources and applicability of their professional development. While these questions will not be included in the 2020-21 NTPS, they will be asked again in the following cycle (expected during the 2023-24 school year).

In addition, please note that the Principal Follow-up Survey was last conducted during the 2016-17 school year, following the 2015-16 NTPS. Results from that data collection are available in the corresponding First Look report (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018066>). Table 4 in that report shows the percentage of principals who stayed at their same school, moved to a different school, or left the profession by their career plans reported during the 2015-16 NTPS. While the Teacher Follow-up Survey to the NTPS does present respondents with similar follow-up questions about the factors that led to their decision, the PFS has historically only measured attrition. The brevity of the PFS allows the survey to be completed by a respondent other than the principal, given that a school administrator can report whether or not a principal continues to serve as principal of their school. Adding additional questions that can only be answered by the principal would reduce the response rate for the PFS by establishing stricter criteria for survey respondents.

We agree that principals’ reasons for leaving their school or profession are valuable data. However, exploring strategies to develop and test new instruments and data collection approaches for collecting additional information from former principals while maintaining high response rates and data quality in the PFS would require resources beyond those currently available to NCES. Please note that NCES is planning to conduct the next PFS collection in the 2021-22 school year, following the 2020-21 NTPS, and will submit an OMB package that includes more details about the methods and procedures for the 2021-22 PFS in 2021.

Sincerely,
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