

**DATE:** April 6, 2021  
**TO:** Robert Sivinski, OMB  
**THROUGH:** Carrie Clarady, NCES  
**FROM:** Maura Spiegelman, NCES  
**SUBJECT:** 2020-21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS 2020-21) Teacher Promised Incentive Increase Change Request (OMB# 1850-0598 v.40)

The National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), conducted every two to three years 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. 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 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, teacher training opportunities, retention, retirement, hiring, and shortages.

The NTPS 2019-20 preliminary activities were approved in July 2019, with a change request approved in November 2019 (OMB# 1850-0598 v.26-27). OMB approved the main study for 2020-21 in March 2020 (OMB# 1850-0598 v.28-30). In December 2019, NCES received OMB approval (OMB#1850-0803 v. 259) for cognitive interviews to test new and revised items about virtual schools and online course offerings in the NTPS School Questionnaire. Questions about virtual schools and online course offerings were revised, based on the results of this cognitive testing. This testing occurred in the winter and spring of 2020. During the end of this testing window, in March 2020, it became clear that questions needed to distinguish between typical practices (the intent of these questions) and changes implemented by schools due to the coronavirus (COVID-19). Questions on virtual schools and online course offerings were added to all NTPS questionnaires (OMB# 1850-0598 v.31-33).

NCES has made multiple modifications to address the challenges of reaching schools, principals, and teachers during a pandemic (OMB# 1850-0598 v.34-39). References to the coronavirus pandemic were added to previously-approved contact materials (OMB# 1850-0598 v.34-35). NCES added additional e-mails to our data collection plan (OMB# 1850-0598 v.36-37, 39) due to concerns that staff may not be physical present at their schools on a regular basis to receive and process paper mailings. Operational challenges due to COVID-19 led to additional changes in data collection strategies. For example, although the National Processing Center was operational, nearly all scheduled mailings were delayed due to the inability to reassign staff between “podding” teams, and planned mail carriers were changed due to delays and capacity limits from overburdened USPS, FedEx, or UPS staff (OMB# 1850-0598 v.38). Operational challenges compromised planned incentive experiments when the manufacturer for a nonmonetary incentive closed temporarily due to a coronavirus outbreak, security requirements allowed prepaid cash incentives to be handled one day per week, and we believed that the results of the experiments would not be informative if teachers were not physically present in their school buildings to receive incentives when deciding whether to complete the questionnaire. As a result, all teachers sampled late in data collection were instead offered a promised incentive if they completed the teacher questionnaire (OMB# 1850-0598 v.38).

Even with these changes to data collection and contact methods, response rates for the 2020-21 NTPS are lower than previous data collections. As of the end of March, unweighted preliminary response rates for public and private schools and principals ranged from about 55% to 60%. However, overall response rates for public and private school teachers

were about 38% and 33%, respectively. While we are continuing to e-mail teachers approximately weekly, and we are still seeking permission from several large school districts to contact their schools and teachers, we remain concerned about NTPS teacher response rates.

Previous NTPS research suggests that this a small increase in incentive may help drive higher response rates. The most relevant SASS/NTPS past empirical work come from the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study (BTLS) in 2009-10 and the 2017-18 NTPS. Both used prepaid cash incentives, rather than promised, but returning to prepaid cash incentives isn't operationally feasible for the 2020-21 NTPS at this point.

For the 3rd BTLs wave, \$20 prepaid cash incentives increased response rates compared to \$10 prepaid. Given our current response rates, even a 4 point increase for sampled teachers would be quite helpful.

><https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2017355><

More recently, we used contingency incentives with late-sampled nonresponding teachers in the 2017-18 NTPS. These were prepaid \$10 or \$20 cash incentives (depending on a school's priority status) for key domains with relatively low response rates. Overall, these late incentives did increase response rates by about 7 percentage points among those teachers. In fact, because of this success, our original OMB package included a note that we may exercise a similar option for the 2020-21 NTPS (though, at the time, that was planned as a prepaid incentive).

>[https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/pdf/research/aapor\\_conference\\_2019\\_adaptive\\_incentive\\_with\\_nonrespondents\\_508.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/pdf/research/aapor_conference_2019_adaptive_incentive_with_nonrespondents_508.pdf)<

NCES proposes further amending the use of teacher incentives. The original experimental design (which compared the effectiveness of prepaid cash and nonmonetary incentives) was changed to promised \$10 cash incentives for all teachers sampled in late December and beyond. This change request increases the promised incentive amount to \$20. Because a given school's teacher sample likely includes both teachers who have already responded and teachers who have not yet responded, this increased promised incentive will be available to both late-sampled teachers who have not yet completed the teacher questionnaire and late-sampled teachers who have already completed the teacher questionnaire when offered the lower amount.

To further emphasize the promised incentives, e-mail subject lines were modified to refer to the incentive amount.

All changes in the attached materials are shown in full in the pages to follow. Black font demarks the text that remains unchanged from the last approved package, while text in **red font** shows the revisions that were made. This requested change does not affect the approved total cost to the federal government for conducting this study nor the estimated respondent burden.

## Part B

### B.4.2.2 Testing at the Teacher-level (p. 38)

The planned testing of teacher incentives and envelope packaging described above was altered mid-data collection, as the coronavirus pandemic presented challenges and made the plan operationally infeasible. The plan outlined above was implemented for early waves of teachers (teachers sampled through mid-December 2020). Teachers sampled in late-December and beyond were instead offered a promised cash incentive to be mailed directly to the responding teacher later in the school year. **Tailored Contact Materials at the teacher level (2T).** The first wave of teachers were offered \$5 or \$10 based on the school's "priority status". Due to continued response rate challenges for teachers sampled in later waves, this promised incentive will be increased to \$20. For equity within schools and to avoid putting quick-to-respond teachers at a disadvantage, all responding teachers sampled in later waves will receive this higher promised incentive. Respondents sampled for NTPS receive letters and e-mails that emphasize the importance of their participation in the survey, but this information has not emphasized the ways in which NTPS data inform researchers and policymakers. In NTPS 2017-18, the statement "Public school teachers provided an average of 27 hours of instruction to students during a typical week in the 2015-16 school year. What about you?" was added to the outside of Third Reminder Teacher Letter envelopes for the final wave of sampled public school teachers.

## Appendix A

### Reminder Teacher Mailout E-mail (E-mail 9) (p. 141)

Subject: Earn \$20: The Census Bureau needs your opinion now

Body:

Dear <Teacher Name>,

The success of the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) depends on your participation. NTPS data are used by Congress, state education agencies, public school districts, and education research organizations to develop education policies to improve working conditions for principals and teachers across the U.S. The NTPS is the only national survey that provides this kind of information. **Let your voice be heard** and help us continue to provide relevant and reliable data by responding to the Teacher Questionnaire now.

If you have recently responded to the survey, thank you. If you have not yet done so, please respond online or by mail as soon as possible. [PI: As a reminder, we will mail you \$X later this school year as a token of our appreciation for sharing your opinion by completing this important survey.]

**[Click here to complete the Teacher Questionnaire.](#)**

Log in using this User ID: <USER ID>

Thank you in advance for responding to this important survey.

Sincerely,

National Teacher and Principal Survey Team  
U.S. Census Bureau, on behalf of the  
National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)  
1-888-595-1338 | ntps@census.gov | http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps

*Reminder Teacher Mailout E-mail (E-mail 10) (p. 142)*

Subject: The U.S Department of Education wants to hear from you: **Receive \$20 by telling us about challenges you are facing in the classroom** ~~What challenges are you facing in the classroom?~~

Body:

Dear **<Teacher Name>**,

We acknowledge that this year has been difficult. The pressures of the coronavirus pandemic have placed additional strain on schools, teachers, and the education system in general. However, this makes your experience all the more important to share. Respond to the 2020-21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) Teacher Questionnaire now to tell us about challenges you are facing in the classroom and how your teaching has been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Only a small percentage of teachers are selected to participate, so your voice will also represent the voices of your colleagues.

Please complete the Teacher Questionnaire online or using the paper survey that we mailed to your school address as soon as possible. **[PI: To thank you for your participation and completing this important survey, we will mail you \$X later this school year.]**

**[Click here to complete the Teacher Questionnaire.](#)**

**Log in using this User ID: **<USER ID>****

As a reminder, if responding online, you will be able to save your answers and return to complete the survey later if you get interrupted. We are also strictly prohibited from sharing any of your responses to the survey questions with any of your school administration.

Thank you for your consideration and prompt response.

Sincerely,

National Teacher and Principal Survey Team  
U.S. Census Bureau, on behalf of the  
National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)  
1-888-595-1338 | ntps@census.gov | http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps

Subject: Share your experience: **Receive \$20 from a** U.S Department of Education research survey

Body:

Dear **<Teacher Name>**,

We have been contacting you throughout the school year regarding the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) Teacher Questionnaire. The NTPS is the only survey that collects information directly from teachers and principals to provide a picture of education in the United States from their perspective. None of the NTPS facts and findings would be possible without the participation of teachers like you.

This is your chance to let your voice be heard! We need your help to continue to produce representative data for [1: **<STATE>** public//2: **<Catholic/private>**] school teachers. If you have recently responded, thank you. If you have not yet completed the survey, please respond as soon as possible. **[PI: As a reminder, to thank you for your participation and completing the Teacher Questionnaire, we will mail you \$X later this school year.]**

**[Click here to complete the Teacher Questionnaire.](#)**

**Log in using this User ID: **<USER ID>****

Please be assured that your responses to the survey will not be shared with anyone at your school.

Thank you for your contribution to this important survey.

Sincerely,

National Teacher and Principal Survey Team  
U.S. Census Bureau, on behalf of the  
National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)  
1-888-595-1338 | [ntps@census.gov](mailto:ntps@census.gov) | <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps>

Subject: Tell the U.S Department of Education about being a teacher: **Earn \$20 by taking Take** our survey today

Body:

Dear **<Teacher Name>**,

We have contacted you throughout the school year regarding the 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS). The Teacher Questionnaire gives you the chance to tell policymakers about your experiences in the teaching profession. Please complete the Teacher Questionnaire as soon as possible to help us obtain an accurate view of teachers' professional backgrounds, teaching fields, workloads, and working conditions, among other things. **[PI: As a token of our appreciation for completing this important survey, we will mail you \$X later this school year.]**

**[Click here to complete the Teacher Questionnaire.](#)**

**Log in using this User ID: <USER ID>**

As a reminder, please be assured that your responses to the survey will not be shared with anyone at your school.

Thank you for your contribution to this important survey.

Sincerely,

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