

School Pulse Panel Preliminary Activities

OMB# 1850-NEW

Supporting Statement

Part A

**National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)
U.S. Department of Education**

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Appendices

- A Special Local Education Agency (LEA) Recruitment
- B Recruitment Communication Materials
- C Draft items to be asked of districts during initial contacts

A.1 Circumstances Making Collection of Information Necessary

This is an emergency request to contact and recruit school districts (referred to throughout as “districts” and “LEAs (Local Education Agencies)”) and sampled schools to voluntarily participate in a new online panel study which aims to better understand how schools, students, and educators are responding in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. It is the first of two emergency requests that will be required to allow the new School Pulse Panel study to begin data collection on time to satisfy the requirements of EO 14000.

The School Pulse Panel is a new study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), within the United States Department of Education, to collect extensive data on issues concerning the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students and staff in U.S. public primary, middle, high, and combined-grade schools. The survey will ask school district staff and sampled school principals about topics such as instructional mode offered; enrollment counts of subgroups of students using various instructional modes; learning loss mitigation strategies; safe and healthy school mitigation strategies; special education services; use of technology; use of federal relief funds; and information on staffing. Because this data collection is extremely high priority and time sensitive, it will undergo Emergency Clearance. It will not go through a 60-day public comment period and will only undergo a 30-day public comment period after clearance has been granted.

The administration of the School Pulse Panel study is in direct response to President Biden’s Executive Order 14000: Supporting the Reopening and Continuing Operation of Schools and Early Childhood Education Providers. It will be one of the nation’s few sources of reliable data on a wealth of information focused on school reopening efforts, virus spread mitigation strategies, services offered for students and staff, and technology use, as reported by school district staff and principals in U.S. public schools. About 1200 public elementary, middle, high, and combined-grade schools will be selected to participate in a panel where school and district staff will be asked to provide requested data monthly during the 2021-22 school years. This approach provides the ability to collect detailed information on various topics while also assessing changes in reopening efforts over time. Given the high demand for data collection during this time, the content of the survey may change on a quarterly basis.

A.1.1 Purpose of This Submission

Before data collection can begin, many school districts (“special districts”) require for an application providing an overview of the study to be reviewed by a research committee. The purpose of this submission is to obtain clearance for this operation of “special district” application submissions. This submission also requests for clearance of recruitment communication materials and the collection of up to eight items to be asked of districts as part of the recruitment operation.

Upon clearance of this emergency package for special district application and recruitment activities, NCES will submit an additional Emergency Clearance package to describe the School Pulse Panel data collection in full. Like this Preliminary Activities package, the School Pulse Panel Data Collection package will not go through a 60-day public comment period and will only undergo a 30-day public comment period after clearance has been granted.

A.1.2 Legislative Authorization

NCES is authorized to conduct the School Pulse Panel by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP 2021; Sec. 2010) and the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002; 20 U.S.C. §9543).

A.1.3 Prior and Related Studies

The School Pulse Panel is essentially a continuation of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) 2021 School Survey (OMB# 1850-0957) that is being fielded in the spring of 2021. This NAEP 2021 School Survey met the need of Executive Order 14000 by using an existing sample and survey instrument to quickly collect information on instructional mode offerings and enrollment counts of various subgroups of students using the various instructional modes. The School Pulse Panel intends to continue to collect this

critical information, along with other priority items for the White House, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Department of Education program offices throughout the 2021-22 school year.

A.1.4 Study Design

The U.S. Census Bureau will collect the School Pulse Panel data on behalf of NCES. The School Pulse Panel will be a self-administered, online survey (as built in Qualtrics). There will be two components to the full online survey: 1) a district-level component focused on administrative data and 2) a school-level component focused on attitudinal questions and questions best asked of staff with more direct knowledge of day-to-day operations. It is estimated for the survey (both components) to require a total of about 4 hours of district and school staff time.

The district of the sampled school will be offered a reimbursement of a total of \$5,000 for their participation in the study over the course of 12 months. This will be in the form of a loaded debit card with \$1,250 that will be sent to the district after the first three months of collections, and then money will be added to the card on a quarterly basis throughout the school year. Principals, or the school staff most knowledgeable about COVID-19 impacts on the school environment and instructional offerings, can complete the school-level component and a district-level component will be available to be completed by district staff should the school prefer that flexibility in responding. No classroom time is involved in the completion of this survey.

The School Pulse Panel will provide aggregate estimates for public schools across the nation. A stratified sample design will be used to select approximately 1,200 U.S. public schools. The sample is designed to provide national estimates of primary, middle, and high schools taking into account the type of locale (urbanicity) and racial/ethnic student enrollment.

The sampling frame for the School Pulse Panel is derived from the Common Core of Data (CCD), the universe of public schools supplied annually by state educational agencies to NCES. Only public schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia will be included in the School Pulse Panel sampling frame. Certain types of schools are excluded, including newly closed schools, home schools, virtual schools, ungraded schools, correctional facilities, and schools with high grades of kindergarten or lower. Regular public schools, charter schools, alternative schools, special education schools, vocational schools, and schools that have partial or total magnet programs are included in the frame. For sample allocation purposes, strata are defined by instructional level, type of locale (urbanicity), and percent minority enrollment.

A.2 Purposes and Uses of the Data

The January 21, 2021 [Executive Order on Supporting the Reopening and Continuing Operation of Schools and Early Childhood Education Providers](#) states that the Department of Education must “coordinate with the Director of the Institute of Education Sciences to facilitate, consistent with applicable law, the collection of data necessary to fully understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students and educators, including data on the status of in-person learning. These data shall be disaggregated by student demographics, including race, ethnicity, disability, English-language-learner status, and free or reduced lunch status or other appropriate indicators of family income.”

With the participation of educators and school leaders across the country, NCES will be able to report a wealth of information that meets the needs of the Executive Order, as well as other stakeholders, in an online dashboard.

A.2.1 Research Issues Addressed in the School Pulse Panel

Content Domains and Research Questions:

The School Pulse Panel will be a dynamic monthly survey and content will change based on what we learn over time from your school and district. The monthly survey will likely have a district-level component and a school-level component. These components will encompass broad content domains, each with a series of measurement items addressing a specific research question. Each content domain is briefly stated

below in terms of the issues in need of measurement, as well as the research questions we are seeking to answer. At the time of submission of this application, content domains have been developed but items are still being drafted and tested. Below are examples of the types of content domains and corresponding research questions:

- I. Instruction mode offered and enrollment counts for subgroups receiving each type of instruction mode for SY2021-22:
 - a. For the 2021-22 school year, which instruction mode (in-person, hybrid, virtual) is being offered to students?
 - b. If hybrid, how many students in various subgroups are receiving in-person instruction?
 - c. If hybrid, how many students in various subgroups are receiving virtual-only instruction?
 - d. What is the average daily attendance rate for students receiving in-person instruction? Virtual instruction?

- II. Instructional program offerings during the summer of 2021
 - a. What types of school offerings did your school offer to help with learning loss?
 - b. What types of programs or services were provided for special subpopulations?

- III. Mitigation strategies used to reduce risk of spread of COVID-19
 - a. Does your school require daily symptom screening for students, teachers, and staff?
 - b. Are personal protective equipment for students, teachers, and staff required?
 - c. Is your school requiring the social distancing of students?
 - d. Has your school reduced the number of students in classrooms?

- IV. Use of technology, computer devices, and internet access
 - a. Are laptops or tablets offered and available to all students in the school to assist with virtual learning?
 - b. Was internet access provided to students?

- V. Federal relief fund use
 - a. How are American Rescue Plan funds being used to assist with:
 - i. Virtual learning?
 - ii. Safety precautions?
 - iii. Activities to support students?

- VI. Special education and mental health services provided
 - a. Have there been challenges to meeting IEP requirements?
 - b. Have there been changes in special education teacher counts since over the course of the pandemic?
 - c. What mental health services are provided for students, teachers, and staff?
 - d. Have there been change in counts of school psychologists, counselors, and nurses over the course of the pandemic?

- VII. Staffing
 - a. As of the start of the 2021-22 school year, do you have any administrative staff, teacher, or support staff vacancies?

A.3 Appropriate Use of Information Technology

Special district approval will be completed through email and by phone.

Each district and school volunteering to participate in the School Pulse Panel will identify a designated staff member to serve as its School Pulse Panel district and school respondents. An online instrument is being developed in Qualtrics so that respondents would provide requested information online.

A.4 Efforts to Identify Duplication

NCES anticipates coordinating efforts with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to unduplicate content areas and reduce overlap in sampled schools, to the extent possible. This data collection activity conducted by NCES will be an important source of information to aid the U.S. Department of Education in understanding the current state of the educational system and how to proceed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A.5 Method Used to Minimize Burden on Small Businesses

The school sample will contain small-, medium-, and large-size public schools. Schools are included in the sample proportional to their representation in the population, or as necessary to meet reporting goals. For the School Pulse Panel, it is necessary to include small schools so that such schools are represented in the data collection and in the reports.

A.6 Frequency of Data Collection

NCES plans for the School Pulse Panel to be a monthly collection beginning with basic operational items (see appendix C) being collected throughout the summer as initial contact is made with districts and school staff to help familiarize with the study, and then the full collection will begin in September and continue through the 2021-22 school year and following summer months.

A.7 Special Circumstances of Data Collection

The January 21, 2021 Executive Order on Supporting the Reopening and Continuing Operation of Schools and Early Childhood Education Providers states that the Department of Education must “coordinate with the Director of the Institute of Education Sciences to facilitate, consistent with applicable law, the collection of data necessary to fully understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students and educators, including data on the status of in-person learning.”

Because this data collection is extremely high priority and time sensitive, it will undergo Emergency Clearance. It will not go through a 60-day public comment period and will only undergo a 30-day public comment period after clearance has been granted.

A.8 Consultants outside the Agency

NCES is pursuing an interagency agreement with the U.S. Census Bureau to collect the School Pulse Panel data on behalf of NCES. Additionally, NCES has been working closely with IES, other program offices within the U.S. Department of Education, White House staffers, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to help provide input on the content to be collected as part of the School Pulse Panel.

NCES anticipates utilizing contract support to assist with reviewing data collection-related specifications, reviewing and providing recommended changes to the questionnaire, assisting with quality assurance testing of the online instrument, and disseminating the data and findings on an online dashboard.

A.9 Provision of Payments or Gifts to Respondents

Some districts charge a fee (~\$50-200) to process research application requests, which will be paid as necessary.

For the full collection, NCES plans to provide districts with a \$5,000 reimbursement for their effort in providing data on a monthly basis for the duration of the school year. This will be in the form of a loaded debit card with \$1,250 that will be sent to the districts of sampled schools after the first three months of collections, and then money will be added to the card on a quarterly basis throughout the school year.

A.10 Assurance of Confidentiality

Data security and confidentiality protection procedures have been put in place to ensure that all contractors and

agents working on the study comply with all privacy requirements including, as applicable:

1. The Inter-agency agreement with NCES for this study and the statement of work of the contract;
2. Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. §552a);
3. Privacy Act Regulations (34 CFR Part 5b);
4. Computer Security Act of 1987;
5. U.S.A. Patriot Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-56);
6. Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9573);
7. Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015 (6 U.S.C. §151);
8. Foundations of Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018, Title III, Part B, Confidential Information Protection
9. The U.S. Department of Education General Handbook for Information Technology Security General Support Systems and Major Applications Inventory Procedures (March 2005);
10. The U.S. Department of Education Incident Handling Procedures (February 2009);
11. The U.S. Department of Education, ACS Directive OM: 5-101, Contractor Employee Personnel Security Screenings;
12. NCES Statistical Standards; and
13. All new legislation that impacts the data collected through the inter-agency agreement and contract for this study. The U.S. Census Bureau will collect data under an interagency agreement with NCES, and maintain the individually identifiable questionnaires per the agreement, including:

The U.S. Census Bureau will collect data under an interagency agreement with NCES, and maintain the individually identifiable questionnaires per the agreement, including:

1. Provisions for data collection in the field;
2. Provisions to protect the data-coding phase required before machine processing;
3. Provisions to safeguard completed survey documents;
4. Authorization procedures to access or obtain files containing identifying information; and
5. Provisions to remove printouts and other outputs that contain identification information from normal operation (such materials will be maintained in secured storage areas and will be securely destroyed as soon as practical).

U.S. Census Bureau and contractors working on the School Pulse Panel will comply with the Department of Education's IT security policy requirements as set forth in the Handbook for Information Assurance Security Policy and related procedures and guidance, as well as IT security requirements in the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA), Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) publications, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) standards and guidance. All data products and publications will also adhere to: the revised NCES Statistical Standards, as described at the website: <http://nces.ed.gov/statprog/2012/>.

By law (20 U.S.C. §9573), a violation of the confidentiality restrictions is a felony, punishable by imprisonment of up to 5 years and/or a fine of up to \$250,000. All government or contracted staff working on the study and having access to the data, including field staff, are required to sign an NCES Affidavit of Nondisclosure and have received public-trust security clearance. These requirements include the successful certification and accreditation of the system before it can be implemented. Appropriate memoranda of understanding and interconnection security agreements will be documented as part of the certification and accreditation process.

From the initial contact with the participants in this survey through all of the follow-up efforts, potential survey respondents will be informed that (a) the U.S. Census Bureau administers the study on behalf of NCES; (b) NCES is authorized to conduct the study by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543); (c) all of the information they provide may only be used 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); and (d) that their participation is voluntary.

The following language will be included in respondent contact materials and on data collection instruments:

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the U.S. Department of Education, conducts the School Pulse Panel as authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP 2021; Sec. 2010) and the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543).

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).

The following language will be included on data collection instruments:

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this voluntary information collection is 1850-NEW. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 240 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate, suggestions for improving this collection, or comments or concerns about the contents or the status of your individual submission of this questionnaire, please e-mail: XXX@census.gov.

A.11 Sensitive Questions

There are no questions of a sensitive nature in in the preliminary activities for the School Pulse Survey.

Items for the full study are currently being developed. The White House and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have requested for the collection of school staff vaccinations and COVID-19 case counts. At this time, the inclusion of these items is still to be determined.

A.12 Estimated Response Burden

This request is to contact districts and schools in order to begin preliminary activities for the study, namely: (a) contacting and seeking research approvals from “special districts,” where applicable, and (b) notifying sampled district and school staff of their selection for the survey and collecting up to 8 school operational-related items via an online instrument.

Based on an assessment of other NCES studies that also require this “special district” recruitment operation, such as the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) data collection, we estimate that roughly 300 special contact districts will be in the sample. The special contact districts are those known to require completion of a research application before they will allow schools under their jurisdiction to participate in a study. Contacting “special districts” begins with updating district information based on what can be gleaned from online sources and what is known from other NCES collections. Individual districts will be contacted as needed to fill in gaps about where and to whom to send the completed required research application forms. The estimated number of such districts represents those with particularly detailed application forms and lengthy processes for approval. This operation should begin as soon as possible after receiving OMB’s approval to allow time for special districts’ review processes. We will continue to work with the districts until we receive a final response (approval or denial of request).

The projected number of responses is based on the eligibility and response rates observed in NTPS. Not all districts initially flagged as special contact districts will respond in the recruitment effort because they may not have a formal research application process and are not actually a special contact district, as such, the estimated number of responding special districts is lower than the estimated sample size for the special district operation.

The total response burden estimate for special district approvals is based on 360 minutes for review by one staff member, and 60 minutes per member for special district panel review, assuming each panel would on average be composed of six panel members. Based on the estimated hourly rates for principals/administrators

of \$49.52¹, and based on 3,086 total burden hours for the School Pulse Survey preliminary activities, the total estimated burden time cost to respondents is \$152,819.

Table 1. Estimates of respondent burden for preliminary field activities

| Activity | Sample Size | Estimated Response Rate | Estimated Number of Respondents | Estimated Number of Responses | Average Burden Time per Respondent (Minutes) | Total Burden Hours |
|--|-------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Preliminary Activities | | | | | | |
| District IRB Staff Review | 300 | 80% | 240 | 240 | 360 | 1,440 |
| District IRB Panel Review | 300*6 | 80% | 1,440 | 1,440 | 60 | 1,440 |
| Notification email – District respondent | 900 | 80% | 720 | 720 | 3 | 36 |
| 8 item questionnaire – District respondent | 900 | 80% | 720 ^a | 720 | 10 | 120 |
| Notification letter – Schools respondent | 1,200 | 83% | 1,000 | 1,000 | 3 | 50 |
| Total Preliminary Activities | -- | -- | 3,400 | 4,120 | -- | 3,086 |

^aNot a unique respondent; duplicate of the row above

A.13 Estimates of Cost to Respondents

There are no costs to respondents beyond their time to participate. No equipment, printing, or postage charges will be incurred by the participants.

A.14 Cost to the Federal Government

The estimated cost to the federal government for the School Pulse Panel is \$10,166,800 million. The estimated cost to the federal government for the preliminary activities is **\$290,000**.

Table 2. Estimates of Costs to the Federal Government

| Activity | Estimated Costs |
|--|---------------------|
| Project Management (including recruitment and reimbursement) | \$7,302,600 |
| Sample Design and Maintenance | \$350,400 |
| Survey Development and Data Collection | \$884,000 |
| Data Product Development and Review | \$742,100 |
| Data Processing and Dissemination | \$887,700 |
| TOTAL | \$10,166,800 |

A.15 Reasons for Changes in Response Burden and Costs

This is a new emergency data collection request.

A.16 Publication Plans and Time Schedule

This data collection is scheduled to take place monthly from September 2021 through July or August 2022. The release of the first collection in September may take longer than expected, therefore it is expected for that release to be up to 4 weeks after the end of the data collection. It is intended for findings of subsequent collections to be released two weeks after the end of data collection.

¹ The average hourly earnings of principals/education administrators in the May 2020 National Occupational and Employment Wage Estimates sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is \$49.52. Source: BLS Occupation Employment Statistics, <http://data.bls.gov/oes/> Occupation code: Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary Schools (11-9032); Annual Mean Wage \$103,010/2080 hours. Accessed on May 17, 2021.

| Data Collection Month | Monthly Report Published |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| September 2021 | October 2021 |
| October 2021 | October 2021 |
| November 2021 | November 2021 |
| December 2021 | December 2021 |
| January 2022 | January 2022 |
| February 2022 | February 2022 |
| March 2022 | March 2022 |
| April 2022 | April 2022 |
| May 2022 | May 2022 |
| June 2022 | June 2022 |
| July 2022 | July 2022 |
| August 2022 | August 2022 |

A.17 Approval for Not Displaying the Expiration Date for OMB Approval

No exemption from the requirement to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection is being requested for this study.

A.18 Exceptions to the Certification Statement

No exceptions to the certification statement apply to the School Pulse Panel.