

# **School Pulse Panel**

**OMB# 1850-NEW**

Supporting Statement Part A

**National Center for Education Statistics  
Institute of Education Sciences  
U.S. Department of Education**

**February 2022**

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## **A.1 Circumstances Making Collection of Information Necessary**

The School Pulse Panel (SPP) is a new data collection originally designed to collect voluntary responses from a nationally representative sample of public schools to better understand how schools, students, and educators are responding to the ongoing stressors of the coronavirus pandemic. Due to the immediate need to collect information from schools during the pandemic to satisfy the requirement of Executive Order 14000, an emergency clearance (OMB# 1850-0963) was issued to develop and field the first several monthly collections of the SPP. This submission is seeking a request for a full review of the SPP data collection under the traditional clearance review process.

The School Pulse Panel is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), within the United States Department of Education. The purpose of the study is 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 asks school staff about a wide range of topics, including but not limited to instructional mode offered; enrollment counts of subgroups of students using various instructional modes; strategies to address pandemic-related learning needs; safe and healthy school mitigation strategies; mental health services; use of technology; information on staffing, nutrition services, principal/parental/student/staff concerns, absenteeism, and overall principal experiences. It is planned that some new content will be rotated in (and some rotated out) monthly. This package includes items that were fielded as part of the January, February, and March collections, as well as proposed new content to be collected in April, May, and June. Subsequent new content area additions (estimated to take place on a quarterly basis) will take place as revisions with 30-day public comment periods for each subsequent quarterly collection, and may be followed by change requests to further refine items for each month.

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 is 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 principals and other staff in U.S. public schools. About 2400 (1200 in an initial sample and 1200 in a reserve sample) public elementary, middle, high, and combined-grade schools have been initially selected to participate in a panel where school 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 will change monthly.

### **A.1.1 Purpose of This Submission**

The purpose of this submission is to obtain full clearance of the School Pulse Panel study which will 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 asks school staff about a wide range of topics, including but not limited to instructional mode offered; enrollment counts of subgroups of students using various instructional modes; strategies to address pandemic-related learning needs; safe and healthy school mitigation strategies; mental health services; use of technology; information on staffing, nutrition services, principal/parental/student/staff concerns, absenteeism, and overall principal experiences. Specifically, this submission will include communication materials to request sampled schools to participate in the monthly collections, as well as the instruments that were fielded in January, February, and March and those proposed to be fielded in April, May, and June.

### **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 was 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 data collection infrastructure 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 2022 calendar year.

Additionally, the recruitment operation for the School Pulse Panel was cleared under an Emergency Clearance (OMB# 1850-0963) and went through 30-day public comment. This included a generic application to be sent to districts that require special approval prior to conducting research within their schools, recruitment materials to inform sampled schools of the study, and a brief, eight question survey asking about summer school plans. The September 2021, January 2022, February 2022, and March 2022 collections were cleared under the same number (OMB# 1850-0963).

In September 2021, NCES made the decision to suspend data collection for the months of October, November, and December 2021, as the response rate for the first month of the collection was under 10 percent and sufficient data for accurate and unbiased estimates broken out by subgroups were not going to be able to be produced. The reason for the delay was to provide the Institute of Education Sciences sufficient time to redesign the study to improve response rates. A primary strategy was to reduce burden in each month's collection and to rotate content to address data needs of the agencies across months. The January, February, and March SPP collections were based on updated materials cleared through OMB in previous submissions for the study. The SPP study itself continues to be extremely important as schools continue to respond to changing conditions around COVID-19, and the pulse model is one that the agency will need after the pandemic subsides for other quick-turnaround data needs.

### **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. It is estimated for the survey to require, on average, about 30 minutes of school staff time.

The sampled school will be offered a reimbursement of \$400 a month for their participation in the study over the course of 12 months. The reimbursement will be paid out monthly in the form of debit cards. If a school district does not permit its schools to receive any form of incentive, the reimbursement will be sent to a point of contact in the district or the reimbursement will be withheld. Principals, or the school staff most knowledgeable about COVID-19 impacts on the school environment and instructional offerings, can complete the survey. 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 was used to select approximately 1,200 U.S. public schools. In addition, a reserve sample of an additional 1,200 replacement schools was selected to boost the number of responses if any schools from the initial sample do not respond. 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, private schools, and schools with high grades of kindergarten or lower. Regular public schools, charter schools, alternative schools, special education schools, vocational schools, correctional facilities/juvenile justice facilities, 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),

region, 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 schools and districts. Content will also be responsive to the needs of policy-makers. The monthly survey 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 that may be covered on the monthly survey instruments:

- I.** Instruction mode offered and enrollment counts for subgroups receiving each type of instruction mode
  - a. For the 2021-22 school year, which instruction mode (in-person, hybrid, virtual) is being offered to students?
  - b. How many students in various subgroups are receiving each type of instruction?
  - c. How many days a week does the school offer in-person instruction for hybrid students?
  - d. What is the average daily attendance rate for students receiving in-person instruction? Virtual instruction?
- II.** Instructional program offerings to address pandemic-related learning needs
  - a. What types of school offerings did your school offer during the summer of 2021 to help with pandemic-related learning needs?
  - b. During the 2021-22 school year, will the school day be extended? Number of school days increased? Additional before-school or after-school programs?
- III.** Mitigation strategies used to reduce risk of spread of COVID-19
  - a. Does your school require daily symptom screening for students or 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?
  - c. Has your school provided IT or technical support?
  - d. Was professional development on digital learning provided to educators?

- V. Mental health and services provided
  - a. How has the number of students who have sought mental health services from your school changed since the start of the pandemic?
  - b. Has your school hired new staff to focus on social/emotional/mental wellbeing?
  - c. Has your school offered professional development to train teachers on helping students with their social/emotional/mental wellbeing?
  - d. Have there been change in counts of school psychologists, counselors, and nurses over the course of the pandemic?
  
- VI. Staff and Student Vaccinations
  - a. Does your school or district require staff to be vaccinated unless they have a medical waiver?
  - b. What percentage of school staff has received a vaccination?
  - c. What percentage of school staff has received a vaccination?
  
- VII. Staffing Shortages
  - a. As of the start of the 2021-22 school year, do you have any administrative staff, teacher, or support staff vacancies?
  - b. How difficult was it to fill staff vacancies?
  - c. Staff job satisfaction during a pandemic; educator burnout
  
- VIII. Staff perceptions of established mandates
  - a. Vaccines?
  - b. Masks?
  
- IX. Decisions behind instructional mode offerings for students
  - a. What are the types of criteria that factor into the decision-making when considering a learning mode change?
  
- X. Impact of pandemic on school lunch programs
  - a. What are the types of challenges your school is experiencing with obtaining food, beverages, or meal supplies for students participating in school meal programs?
  
- XI. Concerns expressed by parents, staff, and students
  - a. What are the types of concerns being expressed regarding how education is being provided during an ongoing pandemic?
  
- XII. Absenteeism
  - a. Has chronic student absenteeism changed since the start of the pandemic?
  - b. How easy or difficult is it get substitute teachers to fill teacher absences?
  
- XIII. School Climate
  - a. How was the pandemic affected classroom management in your school?
  - b. Have you experienced more behavioral or social emotional issues in the classroom?

**A.3 Appropriate Use of Information Technology**

Communications with sampled schools and district staff will be completed through email and phone.

The self-administered, online instrument was developed in Qualtrics so that respondents would provide requested information online.

#### **A.4 Efforts to Identify Duplication**

NCES coordinated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to reduce overlap in sampled schools, to the extent possible. Additionally, several stakeholders requested the tracking of federal relief funds as a high content priority therefore these items were included in the initial draft versions of the instrument. However, cognitive interviews with principals informed us that these items are just not suitable for school-level staff to respond to. Further, we learned of another U.S. Department of Education data collection effort focused on federal relief funds that is a mandatory, universe collection (the Education Stabilization Fund-Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER I/ESSER II/ARP ESSER Fund) Recipient Data Collection Form (Agency/Docket number: ED-2021-SCC-0096) and opted to remove this section from the School Pulse Panel instrument to reduce duplication of content.

#### **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**

The School Pulse Panel is designed to be a monthly collection that began in January 2022 and will continue through the 2022 calendar year.

#### **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 underwent Emergency Clearance reviews (OMB# 1850-0963) to begin the study and is now going through 60-day and 30-day public comment periods.

#### **A.8 Consultants outside the Agency**

NCES has 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, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 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 is also 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**

The sampled school will be offered a reimbursement of \$400 for their participation in the study over the course of 12 months. The reimbursement will be paid out monthly in the form of debit cards. If a school district does not permit its schools to receive any form of incentive, the reimbursement will be sent to a point of contact in the district or the reimbursement will be withheld.

## **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 30 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: [adp.school.pulse.panel@census.gov](mailto:adp.school.pulse.panel@census.gov).*

#### **A.11 Sensitive Questions**

The instrument includes items about staff and student vaccinations, and future instruments are likely to include items regarding the mental health of staff and students. Although these questions are likely to be sensitive, they provide information that is unavailable elsewhere and that will help leaders and policymakers better understand the state of American schools.

#### **A.12 Estimated Response Burden**

This request is to collect information from a national representative sample of public elementary, middle, and high schools.

The total response burden estimate for this collection is based on a total of 30 minutes to complete the survey per month. It is planned for there to be a total of 12 months. Based on the estimated hourly rates for principals/administrators of \$49.52<sup>1</sup>, and based on 4,752 total burden hours for 12 months of School Pulse Panel collections, the total estimated burden time cost to respondents is \$235,319.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

**Table 1. Estimates of respondent burden for 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 |
|--|-------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| <b>Preliminary Activities</b>                              |             |                         |                                 |                               |  |                    |
| 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 <sup>a</sup>                | 720                           | 10   | 120                |
| Notification letter – Schools respondent                   | 2,400       | 30%                     | 720                             | 720                           | 3  | 36                 |
| <b>Total Preliminary Activities</b>                        | --          | --                      | <b>3,120</b>                    | <b>3,940</b>                  | --   | <b>3,072</b>       |
| <b>Monthly Data Collections</b>                            |             |                         |                                 |                               |  |                    |
| Advance email  | 2,400       | 30%                     | 720                             | 720                           | 3  | 36                 |
| Monthly Survey Response                                    | 2,400       | 30%                     | 720                             | 720                           | 30   | 360                |
| <b>Total Monthly Data Collections – one month</b>          | -           | -                       | <b>720</b>                      | <b>1,440</b>                  | -  | <b>396</b>         |
| <b>Total Data Collection – full year</b>                   | -           | -                       | <b>720</b>                      | <b>17,280</b>                 | -  | <b>4,752</b>       |
| <b>Total Estimated Burden Requested In This Submission</b> | -           | -                       | <b>720</b>                      | <b>17,280</b>                 | -  | <b>4,752</b>       |

Greyed out rows represent burden approved in previous packages and are provided for context only.

### 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 \$12,014,100 million. This includes the estimated cost for the development of the survey instrument, data collections (12 collections), data processing, data file development, dissemination, overall project management, and contract support.

**Table 2. Estimates of Costs to the Federal Government**

| Activity                               | Estimated Costs     |
|--|---------------------|
| Project Management                     | \$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           |
| Contract Support                       | \$1,847,300         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                           | <b>\$12,014,100</b> |

### 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 January 2022 through December 2022. The release of the first several collections may take longer than expected, therefore it is expected for initial releases to be up to 4-6 weeks after the end of the data collection. Because the School Pulse Panel data collections are

considered experimental, reported data will go through minimal processing after collection, and will be released on the SPP dashboard 2-4 weeks after the end of data collection.

| <b>Data Collection Month</b> | <b>Monthly Report Published</b> |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 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                  | September 2022                  |
| September 2022               | October 2022                    |
| October 2022                 | November 2022                   |
| November 2022                | December 2022                   |
| December 2022                | January 2023                    |

**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.