

Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau
OMB Information Collection Request
Annual Survey of School System Finances
OMB Control Number 0607-0700

Part B – Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

1. Universe and Respondent Selection

The fiscal year (FY) 2020 universe consisted of approximately 14,783 governmental school systems as counted in the most recent list of school systems in the Governments Master Address File and was distributed as follows:

Independent School Districts	12,210
Dependent Educational Service Agencies (SEAs)	1,448
Dependent School Systems (not SEAs)	1,125

In addition to the governmental school systems from the Governments Master Address File, the U.S. Census Bureau also collected finance data from approximately 5,200 non-governmental charter school systems for the FY 2020 collection for the Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) using a list of local education agencies from NCES’ Local Education Agency Universe (School District) Survey. The full size of the combined universe is approximately 19,983 school systems.

NCES has maintained annual reimbursable agreements with the Census Bureau that require the collection and dissemination of universe data. The full universe of school systems are included in the annual survey.

Due to the use of central collection from state education agencies, the approximate response rate for the FY 2020 Annual Survey of School System Finances survey cycle was 96 percent.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

The form, F-33, contains the elementary-secondary education finance items collected by the Census Bureau. In practice, this form serves more as a data-reporting guide for respondents rather than as a data collection instrument. The Census Bureau relies heavily on collecting this public school system finance data centrally at the state education agency. All states provide significant amounts of these data centrally to the Census Bureau via the Internet using File Transfer Protocol (FTP). Supplemental forms are sent to school systems in states where the state education agency cannot provide information on assets (F-33-L1), indebtedness (F-33-L2), or both (F-33-L3).

The Census Bureau facilitates central collection by accepting from states data in one of two formats. Currently, 17 states provide the Census Bureau electronic copies of state-

specific detailed education finance data files. The Census Bureau maintains programs for converting these data from the state agency format to the Census Bureau F-33 format. Thirty-four states reformat state-specific data files into the Census Bureau's format prior to submitting the data electronically to the Census Bureau.

All school systems are canvassed in the survey. As such, there is no sampling error for the school systems estimates. However, data are subject to nonsampling errors such as respondent error, coverage error, nonresponse error, and processing error. To mitigate the impact of the nonsampling errors, editing and estimating for missing data items (e.g., prorating state level amounts to school districts) are used.

3. Methods to Maximize Response

1Nonresponse does not have a major impact on the data from this survey. State education agencies provide most of the finance data centrally for their school systems and this survey benefits from the multiple methods that states can use to increase response. Fiscal data reported to state education agencies by school systems are important factors in determining how much state money each school system receives, and thus this incentive helps minimize nonresponse. Fiscal data are used to determine Title I and Impact Aid federal grant allocations.

The Census Bureau uses traditional mail canvass techniques to enhance response for the forms it sends to school systems to obtain debt and asset information. Conducting follow-up mailings to nonrespondents, initiating central data collection techniques, soliciting audit reports in lieu of completed questionnaires, and an Internet collection for debt and asset data are several methods the Census Bureau uses to maximize response.

The Annual Survey of School System Finances has unit and item response rate goals of 85 percent, which meet the response rate thresholds specified in OMB, Census Bureau, and NCES Quality Standards.

The Annual Survey of School System Finances has always exceeded these response rate goals due to long-standing central collection agreements with each state and the District of Columbia. State education agencies generally require school districts to submit complete financial data to them. The survey has received a file from every state respondent every year, which ensures a high response rate.

4. Test of Procedures or Methods

1In FY 2020 and FY 2021 significant revisions were made to the data items on the survey, including updates to the federal revenue section of the survey, the addition of a new section for special education expenditures, and the addition of a new section of data items for COVID-19 federal assistance funds. As was previously done with these revisions, the proposed FY 2022 revisions to the Annual Survey of School System Finances were discussed as part of a webinar hosted by NCES in February 2022. The proposed changes were discussed through poll questions (OMB# 1850-0803 v.310). Most

state coordinators responded positively with regards to their ability to report these new proposed data items. These results went into the decision making process as well as the adjustment to the burden hours. We are continually in contact with respondents and NCES through webinars and informal discussions regarding current and future data collections and the feasibility. Our next webinar is planned for July 2022 to discuss the implementation of the new expenditure data items for COVID-19 federal relief funds.

5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection

Statistical Aspects monitored by:

Magdalena Ramos, Assistant Division Chief, Statistical Research and Methodology, Economic Statistical Methods Division, (301) 763-4295.

Data Collection questions to:

Stephen Wheeler, Supervisory Survey Statistician, Educational Finance Branch, Economic Reimbursable Surveys Division, (301) 763-9950

1 Attachments to the Supporting Statement:

Appendix A: Announcement letter, Form F-33 including 2022 Revisions, Supplemental forms F-33-L1, F-33-L2, and F-33-L3, and Screenshots from online application.

Appendix B: U.S.C. citations.

Appendix C: Letter of Support from 60-day Comment Period