

**School Pulse Panel
(SPP 2024-25)
Preliminary Field Activities**

OMB# 1850-0969 v.12

Supporting Statement

Part A

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

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A.1 Circumstances Making Collection of Information Necessary

A.1.1 Purpose of This Submission

The School Pulse Panel (SPP) is a data collection originally designed to collect repeated 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 was issued to develop and field the first several monthly collections of the SPP in 2021 and a full review of the SPP data collection was performed under the traditional clearance review process in 2022 (OMB# 1850-0969). SPP's innovative design and timely dissemination of findings have been used and cited frequently among Department of Education senior leadership, the White House Domestic Policy Counsel, the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Congressional deliberations, and the media. The ongoing interest by stakeholders has resulted in dedicated funding to continue the SPP as an ongoing, quick-turnaround data collection vehicle. The purpose of this request is to conduct preliminary activities for the 2024-2025 SPP, including special contact district recruitment and the fielding of the Screener Survey to gather up-to-date contact information from survey participants.

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 brought to light by the COVID-19 pandemic on students and staff, as well as other important education-related issues that can inform data-driven policy decisions, in U.S. public primary, middle, high, and combined-grade schools.

For the 2024-25 school year, the survey may ask school staff about a wide range of topics, including but not limited to instructional mode offered; enrollment counts of subgroups of students for various subject interests; strategies to address learning recovery; safe and healthy school mitigation strategies; mental health services; use of technology; information on staffing, nutrition services, absenteeism, usage of federal funds, facilities, and overall principal experiences. It is planned that some new content will be rotated in (and some rotated out) monthly. This package includes preliminary activities, including a generic special district application and communication materials, that will be conducted to help with recruitment efforts for the 2024-25 sample.

The School Pulse Panel study has been one of the nation's few sources of reliable data on a wealth of topics focused on school learning recovery efforts, mitigation strategies, services offered for students and staff, and staffing issues, among other topics, as reported by school principals and other staff in U.S. public schools. Given the success of the study, it is anticipated that the SPP will continue to serve in this capacity for the 2024-25 school year. Roughly 8,000 (4,000 in an initial sample and 4,000 in a reserve sample) public elementary, middle, high, and combined-grade schools will be randomly selected to participate in a panel. It is expected these schools will come from roughly 3,000 districts. The goal will be to have national representation from 1,000 responding schools in order to report out national estimates. School staff will be asked to provide requested data (possibly) monthly during the 2024-25 school year. This approach provides the ability to collect detailed information on various topics while also assessing changes over time for items that are repeated from month to month. Given the high demand for data collection during this time, the content of the survey will change monthly. Collections may be monthly or every other/few months.

SPP recruitment is administered for NCES by the U.S. Census Bureau. OMB approval for SPP 2024-25 is being requested for clearance for preliminary field activities including contacting and obtaining research approvals from public school districts with an established research approval process ("special contact districts"), where applicable, notifying sampled schools and districts of their selection for the survey and inviting them to complete short Screener Surveys to establish a point of contact at their school and at the district. In spring of 2024, a clearance for main study data collection activities with schools and districts will be submitted 60-day and 30-day public comment. This will include instruments for the first quarter of monthly collections. Subsequent quarterly content submissions will be submitted for 30-day public comment.

This request is to conduct the SPP 2024-25 preliminary activities, namely special district recruitment and the Screener Survey for the SPP. Additional materials may be added to this package after the 60-day public comment period is complete, in time for the subsequent 30-day public comment period that will begin in December 2023/January 2024. Because the School Pulse Panel Survey is designed to collect data on timely questions, materials for SPP are cleared under two OMB Number sequences. School Pulse Panel materials for SPP 2022 were cleared under OMB#1850-0969,

while 23-24 SPP were cleared primarily under OMB# 1850-0975. For SPP 24-25, materials will be reviewed under OMB# 1850-0969.

A.1.2 Legislative Authorization

NCES is authorized to conduct the School Pulse Panel by 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 an independent annual collection and was originally 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 while the SPP was developed.

A.1.4 SPP 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 \$200 each month that they complete a survey over the course of 11 months between August 2024 and June 2025. School-level surveys may be administered every month. 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 their school environment and experiences within the school, can complete the school-level survey. No classroom time is involved in the completion of these surveys.

The School Pulse Panel will provide aggregate estimates for public schools across the nation. The goal will be to have national representation from 1,000 responding schools in order to report out national estimates. To achieve this, a stratified sample design will be used to select approximately 4,000 U.S. public schools. In addition, a reserve sample of an additional 4,000 replacement schools will be selected to boost the number of responses if any schools from the initial sample do not respond. From there, it is intended for a person within the sampled school's district to be designated as the point of contact for the study. 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. Public schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia will be included in the School Pulse Panel sampling frame. A universe collection from the Outlying Areas (Guam, Northern Marianas, U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa) may be administered as well. Certain types of schools are excluded, including newly closed schools, home 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

SPP 2024-25 will produce rich data that are designed to provide real-time information on the state of the public K-12 education systems across the nation. As our nation's schools continue to deal with the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, federal agency policymakers need real-time, quick turnaround data to help inform resource need to assist with learning recovery efforts and ensuring a safe environment for students and staff.

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. Content will also be responsive to the needs of policymakers. 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 were covered in the 2022 and 2023 SPP and will likely be covered in the 2024-25 SPP:

- I.** Instructional mode offered and enrollment counts for subgroups receiving each type of instructional mode
 - a. For the school year, which instructional mode (in-person, hybrid, virtual) is being offered to students?
 - b. How many students in various subgroups are participating in various types of activities?
 - 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 learning recovery
 - a. What types of school offerings did your school offer during the summer to help with learning recovery?
 - b. During the school year, will the school day be extended? Number of school days increased? Additional before-school or after-school programs?
 - c. What are the types of strategies that will be used to help accelerate learning?

- III.** Mitigation strategies used to reduce risk of spread of pandemic disease
 - 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?
 - e. Has your school taken steps to increase ventilation or filter/clean air in the school? What steps?

- 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? Or trainings on digital learning provided to students?

- V.** Mental health and services provided
 - a. What are the types of mental health services offered at your school?
 - 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 changes in the number of school psychologists, counselors, and nurses at your school since the beginning of the school year?

- 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 students has received a vaccination?

- VII.** Staffing Shortages
 - a. As of the start of the school year, do you have any administrative staff, teacher, or support staff vacancies?
 - b. How difficult was it to fill staff vacancies?
 - c. Has teacher and staff burnout become a more pressing issue at your school during the 2024-2025 school year?
 - d. How have federal funds been used to fill vacancies or create new positions?

- 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.** Supply chain issues and school meals
 - a. What are the types of challenges, if any, 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, if any, being expressed regarding how education is being provided at your school?
- 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 and Safety
 - a. How has the pandemic affected classroom management in your school?
 - b. Have you experienced more behavioral or social emotional issues in the classroom?
 - c. How have new, remote, or hybrid students been welcomed back into the school setting?
 - d. Does your school have a written plan that describes procedures to be performed in the following scenarios?
- XIV.** Community Partnerships
 - a. Does your school use a “community school” or “wraparound services” model?
 - b. Were services that are available through community partnerships added to address challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- XV.** Facilities Management
 - a. Has your school taken any steps to increase ventilation or filter/clean air in school?
- XVI.** Federal Fund Usage
 - a. How are federal funds being used for learning recovery?

A.3 Use of Improved Information Technology

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

Respondents will provide all requested information online.

A4 Frequency of Data Collection

The School Pulse Panel is designed to be a monthly collection that will begin in August 2024 and will continue through June 2025, for a total of 11 months. There will be only one round of special district application, scheduled to begin in early 2024.

A.7 Special Circumstances of Data Collection

No special circumstances for this information collection are anticipated.

A.8 Federal Register Publication

A 60-day Federal Register notice was published on September 27, 2023 (88 FR 66433). Two nonsubstantive comments were received. A 30-day notice will be published.

A.9 Provision of Payments or Gifts to Respondents

Some districts charge a fee (about \$50-200) to process research application requests, which we pay as necessary.

The sampled school will be offered a reimbursement of \$200 every month for their participation in the study over the course of 11 months, from August 2024 to June 2025. The reimbursement will be paid out monthly in the form of debit cards or other methods. 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. This information will be communicated in the district applications and communication materials.

A.10 Assurance of Confidentiality

Data security and confidentiality protection procedures have been put in place for SPP 2024-25 to ensure that all contractors and agents working on SPP 2024-25 comply with all privacy requirements including, as applicable:

1. The Inter-agency agreement with NCES for this study and the statement of work of SPP 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:

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 SPP 2024-25 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:

<https://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 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 1850-0969. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated at [XX] minutes per response based on the mean and median times in the previous collection, 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: addp.school.pulse.panel@census.gov.

A.11 Sensitive Questions

There are no sensitive questions included in the district approval applications.

A.12 Estimated Response Burden

This request is to contact districts and schools in order to begin preliminary activities for SPP 2024-25, namely: (a) contacting and seeking research approvals from public school districts with an established research approval process (“special contact districts”), (b) notifying districts that their school(s) have been selected for SPP 2024-25, and (c) notifying sampled schools of their selection for the survey and inviting them to complete short Screener Surveys to establish a point of contact at their school.

Based on an initial assessment of previous SPP data collections, we estimate that roughly 250 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 previous cycles of collection. 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 will begin in the winter of 2023-24 to allow sufficient time for special districts’ review processes. Special district operations will begin by contacting up to 100 “certainty” special contact districts for which, due to their size, it is certain that at least one school from their jurisdiction will be randomly sampled. Other special contact districts will be contacted after the sample is drawn in the spring of 2024. We will continue to work with the districts until we receive a final response (approval or denial of request) throughout the fall of the 2024-25 school year.

In general, the projected number of respondents is based on the SPP 2024-25 sample size and takes into account eligibility and response rates from the 23-24 SPP. 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. The burden per school for reading the SPP precontact notification is estimated to average about 1 minute. The burden per school for completing the School Screener survey to establish a contact person at the school is

estimated to average about 3 minutes. Based on the estimated hourly rates for principals/administrators of \$51.29¹, and based on 2,551 total burden hours for SPP 2024-25 preliminary activities, the total estimated burden time cost to respondents is \$130,841.

Table 1. Estimates of respondent burden for SPP 2024-25 preliminary 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	250	80%	200	200	360	1,200
District IRB Panel Review	250 x 6	80%	1,200	1,200	60	1,200
Precontact Notification – public schools	4,115	70%	2,881	2,881	1	48
Screeener interview – public schools	4,115	50%	2,058	2,058	3	103
Total Preliminary Activities	--	--	6,339	6,339	--	2,551

Note. Public school sample size includes initial sample from “stateside” public schools and 115 eligible public schools within the Outlying Areas

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 total estimated cost to the federal government for SPP 2024-25 is \$10.0 million. The estimated cost for the preliminary field activities will be roughly **\$600,000**.

A.15 Reasons for Changes in Response Burden Hours and Costs

The previously approved burden was from the data collection phase of a previous cycle of this project, whereas the current request is solely for special district recruitment.

A.16 SPP Time Schedule for Preliminary Activities

The tentative, high-level operational preliminary activities schedule for SPP 2024-25 is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Operational schedule for SPP 2024-25

Activity	Tentative Dates
Preliminary Activities	
Begin contacting Special Districts to begin approval process	December 2023
Complete and deliver certainty special district applications and packages	February 2024 – February 2024 (earliest cut-off)
Select the 2024-25 SPP school sample	March 2024
Complete and deliver applications and packages to newly identified special districts	March 2024 – February 2025 (earliest cut-off)
Mail precontact notifications to sampled schools and districts	June 2024
Mail screener letter to school principals	July 2024
Send initial and reminder email to principals to complete screener	July – August 2024

¹ The average hourly earnings of principals/education administrators in the May 2021 National Occupational and Employment Wage Estimates sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is \$51.29. Source: BLS Occupation Employment Statistics, <http://data.bls.gov/oes/> data type: Occupation code: Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary Schools (11-9032); Annual Mean Wage \$106,690/2,080 hours. Accessed on September 19, 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 SPP 2024-25.

A.18 Exceptions to the Certification Statement

No exceptions to the certification statement apply to SPP 2024-25.