

School Pulse Panel

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Supporting Statement Part B

**National Center for Education Statistics
Institute of Education Sciences
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Section B. Methodology

The U.S. Census Bureau will collect the School Pulse Panel (SPP) data on behalf of NCES. Data collection will be a self-administered, online survey. The survey is estimated to require, on average, 30 minutes of school staff time each month. 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 will be administered every month. The reimbursement will be paid out monthly in the form of debit cards or other mechanisms agreed to with the school. 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 this survey.

The resulting data 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, reserve samples of replacement schools and districts will be selected to boost the number of responses if a notable number of schools or districts from the initial sample do not respond. The sample is designed to provide national estimates of primary, middle, and high schools and districts, taking into account the type of locale (urbanicity) and racial/ethnic student enrollment.

This document may be updated 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.

B1. Respondent Universe and Sample Design and Estimation

The sampling frame for the School Pulse Panel is derived from the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) 2024-25 frame, which itself is largely derived from the Common Core of Data (CCD), the file 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. 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 a high grade 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, and the sample is sorted primarily on the type of locale (urbanicity), percent minority enrollment, and geographic region.

Tables 1-3 show the estimated expected distribution of the public-school sampling universe for the School Pulse Panel by school level and region (Table 1), school level and urbanicity (Table 2), and by school level and percent minority enrollment (Table 3), respectively.

Table 1. Expected respondent universe for the SPP sample, by school level and region, based on the 2023-24 NTPS Frame

| Region | Elementary | Middle/Combined/Other | High/Grade 9-11 | Total |
|-----------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------|
| Northeast | 8,450 | 2,969 | 3,443 | 14,862 |
| Midwest | 12,468 | 4,461 | 6,051 | 22,980 |
| South | 18,075 | 7,480 | 8,157 | 33,712 |
| West | 13,306 | 4,805 | 5,813 | 23,924 |

| | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <i>Total</i> | 52,299 | 19,715 | 23,464 | 95,478 |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|

Table 2. Expected respondent universe for the SPP sample, by school level and urbanicity, based on the 2023-24 NTPS Frame

| Urbanicity | Elementary | Middle/Combined/Other | High/Grade 9-11 | Total |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| City | 15,650 | 5,031 | 6,332 | 27,013 |
| Suburb | 18,007 | 6,471 | 6,355 | 30,833 |
| Town | 5,823 | 2,942 | 3,687 | 12,452 |
| Rural | 12,819 | 5,271 | 7,090 | 25,180 |
| <i>Total</i> | 52,299 | 19,715 | 23,464 | 95,478 |

Table 3. Expected respondent universe for the SPP school sample, by school level and percent minority enrollment, based on the 2023-24 NTPS Frame

| Percent Minority | Elementary | Middle/Combined/Other | High/Grade 9-11 | Total |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| 0 to less than 25 | 15,487 | 5,975 | 7,423 | 28,885 |
| 25 to less than 50 | 11,220 | 4,508 | 4,435 | 20,163 |
| 50 to less than 75 | 8,884 | 3,529 | 3,576 | 15,989 |
| 75+ | 16,708 | 5,703 | 8,030 | 30,441 |
| <i>Total</i> | 52,299 | 19,715 | 23,464 | 94,578 |

Sample Selection

A stratified sample design will be used to select approximately 4,000 U.S. public schools. The sample will be designed to provide cross-sectional national estimates of primary, middle/combined, and high schools, as well as districts, taking into account the type of locale (urbanicity), racial/ethnic student enrollment, and region. Note that combined schools will be grouped with middle schools for the purposes of measurement and estimation.

There are two stages of sample selection. A base sample of 4,000 schools will be drawn as an initial stage as well as another reserve sample (second stage) of 4,000 schools with similar characteristics to our base sample. In case we do not get the necessary number of schools to participate out of the base sample, we plan to reach out to the reserve sample schools to complete the panel. It is expected the 4,000 schools will belong to roughly 3,000 districts.

Roughly 115 Outlying Areas schools will be a part of the SPP data collection. It is planned for the collection of these schools to be a universe collection, so they are separated from the sample of stateside schools. All study operations will be identical for the collection from these schools.

Sample Design for the School Pulse Panel

The main objective of the School Pulse Panel sampling design is to obtain overall subgroup estimates broken out by various school characteristics. For sample allocation and sample selection purposes, strata were defined by instructional level. In addition, region, locale, percent minority enrollment, enrollment size, and charter status were used as implicit stratification variables by sorting schools by these variables within each stratum before sample selection. The explicit stratification and the first three implicit stratification variables (region, locale, and percent minority enrollment) are priorities for evaluation for this panel. The method determined to allocating schools to the different sampling strata is allocate them proportionally to the U.S. public school population.

B2. Procedures for the Collection of Information

Section B.2.1 describes the operations for the preliminary field activities for SPP 2024-25, with Section B.2.1.1 describing special districts operation and Section B.2.1.2 the school and district precontact notification. Section B.2.2 describes procedures for the SPP Screeners.

B.2.1 Preliminary Field Activities

B.2.1.1 Special Contact District Operation

Special contact districts require that a research application be submitted to and reviewed by the district before they will allow schools under their jurisdiction to participate in a study. Districts are identified as “special contact districts” prior to data collection because they were flagged as such during previous cycles of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), NTPS, the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), or the 2022 SPP. Special contact districts are also identified during data collection when districts indicate that they will not complete the survey until a research application is submitted, reviewed, and approved.

Once a district is identified as a special contact district, basic information about the district is obtained from the NCES Common Core of Data (CCD). The basic information includes the NCES LEA ID number, district name, city, and state. The next step is to search the district’s website for a point of contact and any information available about the district’s requirements for conducting external research. Some districts identified as being a special contact district from the previous cycle may be incorrect and staff will verify whether a given district has requirements for conducting external research before proceeding.

The following are examples of the type of information that will be gathered from each district’s website in order to prepare a research application for submission to this district:

- Name and contact information for the district office or department that reviews applications to conduct external research, and the name and contact information of the person in charge of that office;
- Information about review schedules and submission deadlines;
- Whether application fees are required, and if so, how much;
- Whether a district sponsor is required;
- Whether an online application is required, and if so, the link to the application, if possible;
- Information about research topics and/or an agenda on which the district is focusing;
- The web link to the main research department or office website; and
- Research guidelines, instructions, application forms, District Action Plans, Strategic Plan or Goals, if any.

Recruitment staff will contact districts by phone and email to obtain key information not listed on the district’s website, (e.g., requirements for the research application, research application submission deadlines, etc.).

SPP staff developed a generic research application that covers the information typically requested in district research applications. Staff will customize the generic research application to each district’s specific requirements that need to be addressed or included in the research application (e.g., how the study addresses key district goals, or inclusion of a district study sponsor), or submit the generic application with minimal changes to districts that do not have specific application requirements.

Using the information obtained from the district website or phone or email exchanges, a district research request packet will be prepared. Each research application may include the following documents, where applicable:

- District research application cover letter;
- Research application (district-specific or generic, as required by the district);

- Study summary;
- FAQ document;
- Special contact district approval form;
- Participant informed consent form (if required by the district);
- SPP Project Director’s resume;
- Copy of questionnaires; and
- Application fee (if required by the district).

Where required or requested, applications will include draft 2024-25 SPP questionnaires. The SPP content that most closely matches the 2024-25 SPP is that fielded in 2023-24 and may be provided as an exemplar of questionnaires to be administered in school year 2024-25. Other information about the study may be required by the district and will be included with the application or provided upon request.

Approximately one week after the application is submitted to the district (either electronically or in hard copy, as required by the district), SPP district recruitment staff will contact the district’s research office to confirm receipt of the package and to ask when the district expects to review the research application and when a decision will be made. If additional information is requested by the district (e.g., the list of sampled schools), recruitment staff will follow up on such requests and will be available to answer any questions the district may have throughout the data collection period.

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

B.2.1.2 School Precontact notification

The school precontact notification includes mailing a two-sided, full-color letter to sampled schools to introduce the survey, to promote survey recognition, and to verify the school’s mailing address.

B2.2 Screener Surveys

A school screener survey will be sent via email to principals to obtain point of contact information for the delivery of the monthly data collections. This information will collect principal, designated point of contact information, and incentive mailing address information.

B3. Methods to Maximize Response Rates

NCES is committed to obtaining a response rate for the full School Pulse Panel survey that allows for reporting national-level estimates on a monthly basis. In general, a key to achieving this is to track the response status of each sampled school, with telephone follow-up, as well as follow-up by e-mail, of those schools that do not respond promptly. To help track response status, survey responses will be monitored through an automated receipt control system. Telephone interviews will be conducted only by Census Bureau interviewers who have received training in general telephone interview techniques as well as specific training for SPP.

Beginning recruitment of schools and districts on time is an important first step to securing robust participation and high response rates to NCES studies. Additional details about methods to maximize response rates for SPP 24-25 will be provided in the next OMB package.

B4. Tests of Procedures

The procedures for school and district prenotification are determined by school districts around the country, and therefore there are no plans to test procedures for SPP 24-25 preliminary activities.

As part of the development of the SPP instruments, the monthly instrument regularly undergo cognitive testing. Quarterly monthly instruments will be posted for 30-day comment and may simultaneously undergo cognitive testing with 8-9 school personnel. Change requests reflecting substantive modifications to content domains will be submitted and approved prior to each monthly collection. More details about the tests for the procedures of SPP 24-25 will be provided in the next OMB package.

B5. Individuals Responsible for Study Design and Performance

Several key staff responsible for the study design and performance of the School Pulse Panel. They are:

- Rebecca Bielamowicz, National Center for Education Statistics
- Ryan Iaconelli, National Center for Education Statistics
- Chris Chapman, National Center for Education Statistics
- Andrew Zukerberg, National Center for Education Statistics
- Cassandra Logan, U.S. Census Bureau
- Elke McLaren, U.S. Census Bureau
- Alfred Meier, U.S. Census Bureau
- Kathleen Kephart, U.S. Census Bureau
- Jessica Holzberg, U.S. Census Bureau