

School Pulse Panel (SPP 2023-24)

OMB# 1850-0975 v.6

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 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 Council, the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Congressional deliberations, and the media. The ongoing, growing interest by stakeholders has resulted in the request for dedicated funding to create an established NCES quick-turnaround data collection vehicle to become a mainstay for NCES, with the goal of standing up a post-pandemic panel to begin with the 2023-24 school year. Funding for the next cohort has been approved, therefore, there are plans for a 2023-24 cohort. The purpose of this request is for a full review of the 2023-24 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. Initially, the purpose of the study was to collect extensive real-time data on issues brought to light by the COVID-19 pandemic on students and staff, as well as other important education-related issues that could inform data-driven policy decisions, in U.S. public primary, middle, high, and combined-grade schools and districts. Specifically, this was accomplished by collecting data on, among other things, the percentage of the student body starting the school year behind grade level, the types of learning recovery strategies being implemented and the perceived effectiveness of those strategies, classroom behavioral concerns, mental health services provided, and staffing issues. NCES was able to capture each of these pieces in an expedited fashion and report out findings in a matter of weeks, providing rich information to help tell the full story of what students, staff, and administrators were battling on a daily basis. The success of the quick-turnaround nature of the SPP was a clear indication of the immense value of having a real-time data collection vehicle readily available to capture content on prominent events occurring in the school environment. Therefore, stakeholders and ED leadership have asked NCES to continue this type of data collection methodology for the 2023-24 school year and beyond with content extending beyond COVID-19 pandemic impacts on the education environment.

For the 2023-24 school year, the survey may ask school staff about a wide range of topics, including, but not limited to, staffing, learning recovery, tutoring, usage of federal funds, facilities, transportation, school environment issues, and overall principal and school staff experiences, in addition to repeating items from the 2021-22 cohort. It is planned that some new content will be rotated in (and some rotated out) monthly. This package includes details regarding the methodology and operations, as well as potential content areas and an item bank of potential items that can be asked any month.

The School Pulse Panel study is one of the few reliable, nationally representative, quick turnaround studies that produces data on U.S. public schools. The sample design for the 2023-24 cohort will roughly be the same as the 2021-22 cohort, except the overall sample size will be increased to have a total of 8,000 (4,000 in an initial sample and 4,000 in a reserve sample) public elementary, middle, high, and combined-grade schools, which will be randomly selected to participate in the panel. The goal will be to have national representation from 1,200 responding schools in order to report out national estimates. School staff will be asked to provide requested data monthly during the 2023-24 school year. Given the high demand for data collection during this time, the content of the survey is expected to change monthly. This package includes items from the 2021-22 cohort that may be repeated to capture trends, as well as items that fulfill the requests of numerous stakeholders seeking to use the SPP as a data collection vehicle for real-time, quick release information.

The package containing the details of the SPP 2023-24 Data Collection (OMB# 1850-0975 v.2) went through 60-day and 30-day public comment periods beginning in March 2023, and that primary request was approved in July 2023. Following that approval, items in the September and October questionnaires were modified via a change request (v.3) based on the results of cognitive testing; minor changes to the communications materials were also modified via this same change request. A quarterly package (v.4) contained the November 2023-January 2024 questionnaires and the full year of communication materials. This package was formally cleared in October 2023. A change request (OMB# 1850-0975 v.5) was submitted in October 2023 at the conclusion of the 30-day public comment period for this package to make updates to the December 2023 and January 2024 instruments. The content on these surveys was undergoing

cognitive testing during the 30-day public comment period. The current package (v.6) contains the February-April 2024 questionnaires. A change request (OMB# 1850-0975 v.7) will be submitted at the conclusion of the 30-day public comment period for this package to make updates to these instruments, as informed by cognitive testing that will occur during winter of 2023.

SPP recruitment is administered for NCES by the U.S. Census Bureau. OMB approval for the recruitment operation for SPP 2023-24 has been approved 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 of their selection for the survey and inviting them to complete a short Screener Survey to establish a point of contact at their school.

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

This iteration of the SPP is a refresh and extension of the 2021-22 School Pulse Panel (OMB# 1850-0963, OMB# 1850-0969) which was 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.

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 each be offered a reimbursement of \$200 each month that they complete a survey over the course of 11 months between August 2023 and June 2024. 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 1,200 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. 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 and districts 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, private schools, and schools with high grades of kindergarten or lower. Regular public schools, charter schools, alternative schools, special education schools, vocational schools, virtual 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, region, percent students of color enrollment, type of locale (urbanicity), and school size.

A.2 Purposes and Uses of the Data

The success of the quick-turnaround nature of the SPP was a clear indication of the immense value of having a real-time data collection vehicle readily available to capture content on prominent events occurring in the school environment. Therefore, it is desirable for NCES to continue this type of data collection methodology for the 2023-24 school year and beyond with content extending beyond COVID-19 pandemic impacts on the education environment.

While federal agency policymakers have a vested interest in collecting information that informs policy agenda, NCES will ensure that such information is collected and reported in a manner that is objective, secular, neutral, and nonideological; free of partisan political influence and racial, cultural, gender, or regional bias; and relevant and useful to practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and the public.

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 2021-22 SPP and will likely be covered in the 2023-24 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?
- 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? High-dosage tutoring?
- 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 2023-2024 school year?
 - d. How have federal funds been used to fill vacancies or create new positions?
- VIII.** 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?
- IX.** 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?
- X.** 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?
- XI.** 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?
- XII.** 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?
- XIII.** 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?
- XIV.** Facilities Management
- a. Has your school taken any steps to increase ventilation or filter/clean air in school?
- XV.** School Environment
- a. Does your school [Do any schools in your district] obtain drinking water from a public water system such as a city or municipal water plan?
 - b. Is there a requirement that the drinking water in your school [district’s schools] be tested for lead?
 - c. Does your school [Do schools in your district] have a readily available asbestos management plan?
- XVI.** Transportation
- a. Are the streets surrounding your school equipped with sidewalks and bike lanes?
 - b. Are there opportunities for traffic calming to slow or discourage through traffic?
- XVII.** Health Partnerships
- a. Does your school or district partner with or contract out services to an external telehealth or telemedicine program or company to provide on-demand health care for students?
 - b. Did your school or district allow for Medicaid funding for any school health services during the 2023-24 school year?
- XVIII.** Federal Fund Usage
- a. How are federal funds being used for learning recovery?
 - b. Does your school or district allocate funding for teacher professional development for the any of the following learning recovery strategies?
- XIX.** World & Dual Language Programs
- a. Which of the following languages are taught in your school?
 - b. Which type of dual language program do you offer at your school?

A.3 Use of Improved Information Technology

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

The self-administered, online instrument was developed in Qualtrics; respondents will provide all requested information online.

A.4 Efforts to Identify Duplication

The intent of the SPP as a fast-turnaround data collection vehicle capturing real-time information is to have the infrastructure readily available for data collection on a particular topic within a month or two of the request. Therefore, upon receiving a request for content that has yet to be developed, the NCES SPP team first looks for existing items that can be used or modified to fit the need of the request. Using existing items is also ideal given the vast impact of the pandemic on all aspects of the education environment and the interest in comparing new estimates to baseline, pre-pandemic estimates from other data sources. Many items included within the item library are duplicative or modified from existing items taken from NCES's National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), and the Condition of Public School Facilities, the CDC's National School COVID-19 Prevention Survey (NSCPS), and GAO's Surveys of School Districts and States of School Facilities. Additionally, items previously collected from the SPP 2021-22 cohort will be repeated to capture trends over multiple school years.

Additionally, in an effort to reduce burden on schools that could be sampled for multiple NCES surveys, SPP plans to deduplicate its sample as much as possible with the NTPS sample. The 2023-24 NTPS will be in the field at the same time as the 2023-24 SPP.

A.5 Methods Used to Minimize Burden on Small Entities

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. Additionally, NCES is developing the monthly survey instrument to require no more than 30 minutes to complete, and they have the option of seeking help from other school or district staff to assist with the completion of the survey.

A.6 Frequency of Data Collection

The School Pulse Panel is designed to be a monthly collection that will begin in August 2023 and will continue through June 2024, for a total of 11 months. There is only one round of special district applications, which began in early 2023.

A.7 Special Circumstances of Data Collection

No special circumstances for this information collection are anticipated.

A.8 Federal Register Publications

The package containing the details of the SPP 2023-24 Data Collection (OMB# 1850-0975 v.2) published 60-day and 30-day public comment periods beginning in March 2023. A quarterly package (v.4) containing the November 2023-January 2024 questionnaires and the full year of communication materials was published for 30-day public comment in September 2023. The current package (v.6) contains the February-April 2024 questionnaires and will also be published for 30 days of public comment.

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 2023 to June 2024. 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. 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 2023-24 to ensure that all contractors and agents working on SPP 2023-24 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 2023-24 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 1850-0975. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated at 30 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

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. Data collected around these topics are collected at a school-wide level (i.e., items are not about individual students or staff).

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 15 minutes of reading communications and 30 minutes to complete the survey per month. It is planned for there to be a total of 11 months of collections for schools. Based on the estimated hourly rates for principals/administrators of \$51.29¹, and based on 10,175 total burden hours for 11 months of School Pulse Panel collections, the total estimated burden time cost to respondents is \$521,876.

Table 1. Estimates of maximum respondent burden for SPP 2023-24 monthly data collections

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
	3,000	70%	2,100	2,100	1	35
Screener interview – public schools	4,115	50%	2,058	2,058	3	103
	3,000	50%	1,500	1,500	3	75
Total Preliminary Activities	--	--	9,939	9,939	--	2,661
Monthly Data Collections						
Advance letter (1)	4,000	30%	1,200	1,200	3	60
Advance email (1)	4,115	30%	1,235	1,235	3	62
Reminder emails (3)	4,115	30%	1,235	1,235	9	185
Monthly Survey Response (1)	4,115	30%	1,235	1,235	30	618
Total Monthly Data Collections – one month			1,235	4,905		925
Total Data Collection – full year (11 months)				53,955		10,175

¹ The average hourly earnings of principals/education administrators in the May 2022 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/> Occupation code: Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary Schools (11-9032); Annual Mean Wage \$106,690/2080 hours. Accessed on June 13, 2023.

Activity	Sample Size	Estimated Response Rate	Estimated Number of Respondents	Estimated Number of Responses	Average Burden Time per Respondent (Minutes)	Total Burden Hours
<i>Total Estimated Burden Requested In This Submission</i>				53,955		10,175

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

Public school sample size includes initial sample from “stateside” public schools and 115 eligible public schools within the Outlying Areas. Outlying Area schools do not receive an advance letter. Schools stop receiving reminder emails after they complete a survey for a given month; the reminder email row represents the maximum amount of burden.

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 the SPP 2023-24 school-level collection is \$10 million. The includes the estimated cost for the development of the survey instrument, data collections, data processing, data file development, dissemination, overall project management, and contract support.

A.15 Program Changes or Adjustments to Respondent Burden

There are no changes to burden in this package.

A.16 Publication Plans and Time Schedule

This data collection is scheduled to take place monthly from August 2023 through June 2024. Because the School Pulse Panel data collections are considered experimental, reported data will go through expedited processing after collection, and will be released on the SPP dashboard² 5-6 weeks after the end of data collection.

Data Collection Month	Monthly Report Published
August 2023	September 2023
September 2023	October 2023
October 2023	November 2023
November 2023	December 2023
December 2023	January 2024
January 2024	February 2024
February 2024	March 2024
March 2024	April 2024
April 2024	May 2024
May 2024	June 2024
June 2024	July 2024

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 2023-24.

A.18 Exceptions to the Certification Statement

No exceptions to the certification statement apply to SPP 2023-24.

² <https://ies.ed.gov/schoolsurvey/spp/>