

**School Pulse Panel 2025-26 and 2026-27
(SPP 2025-26, SPP 2026-27)
Preliminary Field Activities**

OMB# 1850-0975 v.11

Supporting Statement

Part B

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

**August 2024
revised November 2024**

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Section B. Methodology

The U.S. Census Bureau will collect the School Pulse Panel (SPP) 2025-26 and 2026-27 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 and will be conducted for SPP 2025-26 with a July 2025 Screener followed by data collection over 11 months beginning in August 2025 and ending in June 2026 and for SPP 2026-27 with a July 2026 Screener followed by data collection over 11 months beginning in August 2026 and ending in June 2027. Note that the SPP 2026-27 methodology will be described in greater detail in OMB #1850-0969 and is anticipated to be similar to SPP 2025-26. This document describes pre-contact of special districts for SPP 2026-27 with sampling and contact of individual SPP 2026-27 schools planned in 2026.

The SPP 2025-26 sampled schools will be offered a reimbursement of \$200 each month that they complete a survey over the course of 11 months between August 2025 and June 2026. School-level surveys will be administered every month and the reimbursement will be paid out monthly. 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 1,200 responding schools for SPP 2025-26 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 geographic region (Census region), type of locale (location urbanicity), and students of color enrollment.

B1. Respondent Universe and Sample Design and Estimation

The sampling frame for the 2025-26 SPP is derived from the Common Core of Data (CCD), the file 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 SPP sampling frame. A universe collection from the 115 public schools in the Outlying Areas (Guam, Northern Marianas, U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa) will 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 both the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Outlying Areas. For sample allocation purposes, strata are defined by instructional level, and the sample is sorted to achieve a unique sort by geographic region (Census region), percent students of color enrollment, type of locale (location or urbanicity), school district, size of school (student enrollment), charter status, and unique school identifier.

Tables 1-3 show the estimated expected distribution of the public-school sampling universe for the 50 states and the District of Columbia SPP by school level and region (Table 1), school level and location (Table 2), and by school level and percent students of color enrollment (Table 3), respectively.

Table 1. Expected respondent universe for the 50 states and District of Columbia 2025-26 SPP sample, by school level and region, based on the 2024-25 SPP Frame

Region	Elementary	Middle/Combined/Other	High/Grade 9-11	Total
Northeast	8,282	2,956	3,313	14,551

Midwest	12,343	4,544	6,045	22,932
South	18,136	7,555	7,755	33,446
West	13,001	4,859	5,290	23,150
<i>Total</i>	51,762	19,914	22,403	94,079

Table 2. Expected respondent universe for the 50 states and District of Columbia 2025-26 SPP sample, by school level and locale, based on the 2024-25 SPP Frame

Locale	Elementary	Middle/Combined/Other	High/Grade 9-11	Total
City	15,468	5,109	5,955	26,532
Suburb	17,616	6,438	5,975	30,029
Town	5,677	2,979	3,530	12,186
Rural	13,001	5,388	6,943	25,332
<i>Total</i>	51,762	19,914	22,403	94,079

Table 3. Expected respondent universe for the 50 states and District of Columbia 2025-26 SPP school sample, by school level and percent students of color enrollment, based on the 2024-25 SPP Frame

Percent Students of Color	Elementary	Middle/Combined/Other	High/Grade 9-11	Total
0 to less than 25	14,113	5,422	6,566	26,101
25 to less than 50	11,095	4,584	4,226	19,905
50 to less than 75	9,280	3,825	3,663	16,768
75+	17,274	6,083	7,948	31,305
<i>Total</i>	51,762	19,914	22,403	94,079

Sample Selection

A stratified sample design will be used for SPP 2025-26 to select approximately 4,000 U.S. public schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The sample will be designed to provide cross-sectional national estimates of primary, middle/combined, and high schools. Note that combined schools will be grouped with middle schools for the purposes of measurement and estimation.

A base sample of 4,000 schools will be drawn as well as another reserve sample 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 near identical for the collection from these schools.

Sample Design for the School Pulse Panel

The main objective of the 2025-26 SPP sampling design is to obtain overall subgroup estimates that can be disaggregated by various school characteristics. For sample allocation and sample selection purposes, strata were defined by instructional level. In addition, geographic region (Census region), percent students of color enrollment, type of locale (location or urbanicity), school district, size of school (student enrollment), charter status, and unique school identifier 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, percent students of color enrollment, and locale) are priorities for evaluation for this panel. Schools are proportionally allocated to the different sampling strata according to the overall U.S. public school population.

B2. Procedures for the Collection of Information

Section B2.1 describes the special contact district operations for SPP 2025-26 and SPP 2026-27. Section B2.2 describes procedures for the SPP Screeners.

B2.1 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 2022-2023, 2023-24, or 2024-25 SPP. Special contact districts are also identified during data collection when schools indicate that they will not complete the survey until district approval is obtained.

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/or application form; and
- Research guidelines, instructions, application forms, District Action Plans, Strategic Plan or Goals, if any.

Recruitment staff will contact districts by phone and/or 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. To help reduce administrative burden on districts and for SPP overall, special district applications will include an option for two-year approval (2025-26 and 2026-27) for participation in SPP. Districts may still participate if approval for only one year is granted.

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 if required by the district, where applicable:

- District research application cover letter;
- Research application (district-specific or generic);
- Study summary;
- FAQ document;
- Special contact district approval form;
- Participant informed consent form;
- Contact materials (i.e. letters, emails)
- IRB approval letter
- CITI Training Certificate for the Project Director
- SPP Project Director's resume;
- Copy of questionnaires; and
- Application fee.

Where required or requested, applications will include draft 2025-26 SPP questionnaires or examples from past 2024-25 SPP questionnaires. The SPP content that most closely matches the 2025-26 SPP is what was fielded in 2024-25 and may be provided as an exemplar of questionnaires to be administered in school year 2025-26 and 2026-27. 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 (~\$25-350) to process research application requests, which will be paid as necessary. Special contact 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 in SPP 2025-26 and at least one school is planned to be randomly sampled in SPP 2026-27. Other special contact districts will be contacted after the 2025-26 SPP sample is drawn in the spring of 2025. Within the application, SPP will also ask special districts to approve the SPP application for two years, with a list of sampled schools for SPP 2026-27 planned to be provided to special districts in 2026.

B2.2 Screener Surveys

A school screener survey invitation with a survey link will be sent via email to SPP 2025-26 principals to obtain point of contact information for the delivery of the monthly data collections. This survey 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 (SPP) 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 2025-26 will be provided in the next OMB package and details about methods to maximize response rates for SPP 2026-27 will be provided in future OMB packages for #1850-0969.

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 2025-26 or SPP 2026-27 preliminary activities.

As part of the development of the SPP instruments, the monthly instrument regularly undergoes cognitive testing with up to 20 personnel. Monthly instruments will be posted for 30-day comment and may simultaneously undergo cognitive testing with 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 2025-26 will be provided in the next data collection OMB package and details about tests of procedures of SPP 2026-27 will be provided in future OMB packages for #1850-0969.

B5. Individuals Responsible for Study Design and Performance

Several key staff responsible for the study design and performance of the SPP. They are:

- Erin Tanenbaum, National Center for Education Statistics
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- Chris Chapman, National Center for Education Statistics
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