

**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 A

**National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)
Institute of Education Sciences
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 survey of U.S. public K-12 schools 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 SPP collects data on high-priority, education-related topics that are timely and crucial in helping legislators and education leaders make informed decisions. The SPP is entering its fifth school year of data collection and was originally developed to collect data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools, students, and staff.

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 resulted in the request for dedicated funding to create an established NCES quick-turnaround data collection vehicle to become a mainstay for NCES. Funding for a mainstay collection was approved in late 2022, and NCES conducted a new collection during the 2023-24 school year (OMB# 1850-0975). NCES is currently collecting the 2024-25 school year SPP (OMB#1850-0969).

The purpose of this request is to conduct preliminary activities for the 2025-2026 and 2026-27 SPP, including special contact district recruitment and the fielding of the Screener Survey to gather up-to-date contact information from survey participants. For the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years, the survey may ask school staff about a wide range of topics, including but not limited to staffing; learning recovery; absenteeism; usage of federal funds; 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 2025-26 sample. 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.

The SPP study is one of the few reliable, national representative, quick-turnaround studies that produces data on U.S. public schools. The sample design for the 2025-26 collection will be similar to the 2024-25 collection with 4,000 public elementary, middle, high, and combined-grade schools randomly selected to an initial sample and 4,000 in a reserve sample. It is expected these schools will come from approximately 3,000 districts. The goal will be to have national representation from about 1,200 responding schools each month in order to report out national estimates. School staff will be asked to provide requested data monthly during the 2025-26 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 over time.

SPP recruitment is administered for NCES by the U.S. Census Bureau. OMB approval for SPP 2025-26 and 2026-27 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 a short Screener Survey to establish a point of contact at their school. In 2025, a clearance for main study data collection activities with schools and districts will be submitted 60-day and 30-day public comment that will include instruments for the 2025-26 monthly collections. In 2026, a clearance for main study data collection activities with school and districts will be submitted 60-day and 30-day public comment that will include instruments for the 2026-27 monthly collections. Subsequent quarterly content submissions will be submitted for 30-day public comment.

This request is to conduct the SPP 2025-26 and 2026-27 preliminary activities, namely special district recruitment and the Screener Survey for the SPP. Because the SPP survey is designed to collect data on timely questions, materials for SPP are cleared under two OMB Number sequences. Materials for SPP 2022, SPP 2024-25, and SPP 2026-27 were or are to be cleared under OMB#1850-0969, while SPP 2023-24 and now SPP 2025-26 were or are to be cleared under OMB# 1850-0975.

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 SPP 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. Since then, SPP has fielded 2023-24 SPP (OMB# 1850-0975), which was a refresh and extension of the 2021-22 SPP (OMB# 1850-0963, OMB# 1850-0969), and is currently fielding 2024-25 SPP (OMB# 1850-0975)

A.1.4 SPP Study Design

The U.S. Census Bureau will collect the SPP data on behalf of NCES. The SPP will be a self-administered, online survey. It is estimated for the survey to require, on average, about 30 minutes of school staff time each month and will be conducted for SPP 2025-26 over 11 months beginning in August 2025 and ending in June 2026 and for SPP 2026-27 over 11 months beginning in August 2026 and ending in June 2027.

The SPP 2025-26 sampled school 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. The SPP 2026-27 sampled school will be offered a reimbursement of \$200 each month that they complete a survey over the course of 11 months between August 2026 and June 2027. School-level surveys may 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 survey. No classroom time is involved in the completion of SPP surveys.

The SPP will provide aggregate estimates for public K-12 schools across the nation. The goal will be to have national representation from 1,200 responding public schools in order to report national estimates. To achieve this, a stratified sample design will be used in SPP 2025-26 and separately in 2026-27 (to be described in OMB#1850-0969 and sampling is planned to occur in 2026) 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 geographic region (Census region), type of locale (urbanicity), and students of color enrollment.

The sampling frame for the SPP 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 SPP sampling frame. A universe collection from the Outlying Areas (Guam, Northern Marianas, U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa) will be administered as well. Certain types of schools are excluded, including closed schools, home schools, ungraded schools, private schools, and schools with high grades of kindergarten or lower. Regular public schools, virtual 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 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.

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 near real-time data collection vehicle readily available to capture content on prominent events occurring in the school 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 2025-26 SPP and 2026-27 SPP will be a dynamic monthly survey. Content for the SPP is 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. At the time of submission of this application, content domains have not been developed for all months. Below are examples of the types of content domains that were covered in previous years of the SPP and will likely be covered in the 2025-26 SPP and/or 2026-27 SPP:

- I. Instructional mode offered
 - a. For the school year, which instructional mode (in-person, hybrid, virtual) is being offered by public K-12 schools?
- II. Instructional program(s) offerings
 - a. What programs did schools offer during the summer to public K-12 students?
 - b. What will schools offer for after-school programs to public K-12 students?
- III. Staffing Shortages
 - a. How many teaching and staff vacancies were there before the start of the school year in public K-12 schools?
 - b. How difficult was it to fill teaching and staffing vacancies in public K-12 schools?
 - c. How many teaching vacancies were filled with fully certified teachers before the start of the school year in public K-12 schools?
- IV. Use of technology, computer devices, and internet access
 - a. What percent of public K-12 schools have a written policy on students' use of AI in schools?
 - b. What percent of public K-12 schools offer training on digital literacy for their students?
 - c. What percent of public K-12 schools have a restrictive cell phone policy for students at their school?
- V. Mental health services provided
 - a. What school-based mental health services did public K-12 schools offer to students? Teachers and staff?
 - b. Have there been changes in the amount of school-based mental health services available to students, teachers, and staff in public K-12 schools?
 - c. Have there been changes in the number of students, teachers, or staff seeking school-based mental health services in public K-12 schools?
- VI. Absenteeism
 - a. What is the current daily student attendance rate in public K-12 schools?
 - b. What is the current rate of chronic student absenteeism in public K-12 schools?
 - c. What strategies do school leaders report as effective at reducing student absenteeism in public K-12 schools?
- VII. School Crime and Safety
 - a. What percent of public K-12 schools have a sworn law enforcement officer (SLEOs), including School Resource Officers (SROs), present at their school at least once a week?
 - b. What percent of public K-12 schools have provided trainings for classroom teachers or aides to recognize early warning signs of students likely to exhibit violent behavior?
- VIII. Community Partnerships
 - a. What percent of public K-12 schools use a “community school” or “wraparound services” model?
 - b. What services are available to the community through K-12 public schools’ existing partnerships?

A.3 Use of Improved Information Technology

Communications with sampled schools will be completed through email, mail, and phone. Self-administered, online monthly instruments will be developed in a web based system; respondents will provide all requested information online. If needed, respondents can also complete the monthly survey via telephone interview.

A.4 Efforts to Identify Duplication

The intent of the SPP as a fast-turnaround data collection vehicle capturing near 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 interest in comparing new estimates to baseline 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), the Condition of Public School Facilities, and GAO's Surveys of School Districts and States of School Facilities, and the Fast Response Survey System (FRSS). Additionally, items previously asked on the SPP 2021, 2022-2023, 2023-24, and 2024-25 collections will be repeated to capture trends over multiple school years.

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 SPP, 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 about 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 2025-26 SPP is designed to be a monthly collection that will begin with a Screener survey in July 2025 and continue with monthly data collections starting in August 2025 and continuing through June 2026, for a total of 11 months of data collection. The 2026-27 SPP is designed to be a monthly collection that will begin with a Screener survey in July 2026 and continue with monthly data collections starting in August 2026 and continuing through June 2027, for a total of 11 months of data collection. There will be one round of special district applications per year, scheduled to begin in early 2025 and early 2026, with an option for special districts to provide approval for two years of participation (2025-26 and 2026-27) with a list of sampled schools for SPP 2026-27 provided in 2026.

A.7 Special Circumstances of Data Collection

No special circumstances for this information collection are anticipated.

A.8 Consultations Outside the Agency

NCES has an interagency agreement with the U.S. Census Bureau to recruit schools and collect the SPP data on behalf of NCES. Additionally, NCES has been working closely with IES, other program offices within the U.S. Department of Education, White House staffers, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Department of Transportation to help provide input on the content to be collected as part of the School Pulse Panel.

NCES is also utilizing contract support to assist with reviewing data collection-related specifications, reviewing and providing recommended changes to the questionnaire, assisting with quality assurance testing of the online instrument, and disseminating the data and findings on an online dashboard.

A 60-day notice was published in the Federal Register on August 19, 2024 (89 FR 67074). One public comment was received. A separate response is provided.

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 2025-26 sampled schools will be offered a reimbursement of \$200 every month for their participation in the study over the course of 11 months, from August 2025 to June 2026. The 2026-27 sampled schools will be offered a reimbursement of \$200 every month for their participation in the study over the course of 11 months, from August 2026 to June 2027. 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. This information will be communicated in the district applications, and the communication materials sent to sampled schools are customized based on allowability for receiving reimbursement.

A.10 Assurance of Confidentiality

Data security and confidentiality protection procedures have been put in place for SPP 2025-26 to ensure that all contractors and agents working on SPP 2025-26 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 2025-26 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.

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

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

A.12 Estimated Response Burden

This request is to contact districts and schools in order to begin preliminary activities for SPP 2025-26 and SPP 2026-27, namely: (a) contacting and seeking research approvals from public school districts with an established research approval process (“special contact districts”) for SPP 2025-26 and SPP 2026-27, (b) notifying special contact districts that their school(s) have been selected for SPP 2025-26 and SPP 2026-27, and (c) notifying sampled schools of their selection for the survey and inviting them to complete short Screener Survey to establish a point of contact at their school for SPP 2025-26.

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 contact 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 2025 to allow sufficient time for special contact districts’ review processes. 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. Other special contact districts will be contacted after the sample is drawn in late winter/early spring of 2025. We will continue to work with the districts until we receive a final response (approval or denial of request) throughout the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years. Starting in the 2025-26 recruitment of special districts, to help reduce burden to participation, SPP will seek approval for two years of participation from special districts (2025-26 and 2026-27) where allowable.

In general, the projected number of respondents is based on the SPP 2025-26 and planned SPP 2026-27 sample sizes and takes into account eligibility and response rates from the 2024-25 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 completing the 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 \$53.38¹, and based on 2,503 total burden hours for SPP 2025-26/2026-27 preliminary activities, the total estimated burden time cost to respondents is \$133,610.

¹ The average hourly earnings of principals/education administrators in the May 2023 National Occupational and Employment Wage Estimates sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is \$53.38. 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 \$111,020/2,080 hours. Accessed on May 13, 2024.

Table 1. Estimates of respondent burden for SPP 2025-26 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/Screening survey – public schools	4,115	50%	2,058	2,058	3	103
Total Preliminary Activities	--	--	6,339	6,339	--	2,503

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 2025-26 is \$10 million and SPP 2026-27 is \$10 million. The estimated cost for the preliminary field activities for SPP 2025-26 will be roughly **\$850,000**.

A.15 Reasons for Changes in Response Burden and Costs

The previous collection was for all data collection for the 2024-25 SPP whereas this estimate is for recruitment of school districts for the 2025-26 SPP (and 2026-27 SPP for special contact districts). For special contact districts that opt to provide approval for two years, a reduction in administrative burden would occur for the district.

A.16 SPP Time Schedule for Preliminary Activities

The tentative, high-level operational preliminary activities schedule for SPP 2025-26 and SPP 2026-27 is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Operational schedule for SPP 2025-26

Activity	Tentative Dates
Begin Special Contact Districts applications	January 2025/February 2025
Select the 2025-26 SPP school sample	January 2025
Complete and submit certainty special contact district applications and packages	February 2025
Complete and submit applications and packages to non-certainty special districts	March 2025 – February 2026 (earliest cut-off)
Mail screener survey invitation letter to school principals	July 2025
Send initial and reminder email to principals to complete screener	July 2025
Send monthly letters and initial and reminder emails to complete surveys	August 2025 – June 2026
Select the 2026-27 SPP school sample (to be described in a future OMB package #1850-0969)	January 2026
Mail screener survey invitation letter to school principals (to be described in a future OMB package #1850-0969)	July 2026
Send monthly letters and initial and reminder emails to complete surveys (to be described in a future OMB package #1850-0969)	August 2026-June 2027

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 2025-26 or SPP 2026-27.

A.18 Exceptions to the Certification Statement

No exceptions to the certification statement apply to SPP 2025-26 or SPP 2026-27.