

Private School Universe Survey (PSS) 2025-  
26 and 2027-28 Data Collections, and  
2027-28 PSS Frame Development Activities  
Supporting Statement  
Part B and C

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## B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

### Bl. Respondent Universe

The target population for the survey consists of all private schools in the United States that provide instruction to any of grades Kindergarten-12, or comparable ungraded levels (approximately 30,000 schools).

### B2. Procedures for Data Collection—Statistical Methods, Estimation Procedures, Accuracy, and Anticipated Problems

The universe frame to be used by NCES for the 2025-26 PSS will be composed of the 2025-26 PSS list frame and the 2025-26 area search frame. The list frame is based on the 2023-24 PSS and is updated with current membership lists from private school associations and private school lists from state departments of education and social services (for kindergarten programs) (see appendices A and B for examples of letters used to request private school lists). The area search frame is developed after a systematic search of approximately 124 randomly selected primary sampling units (PSUs). The list of schools found in this search is unduplicated with the list frame to yield the area search frame schools. The area search frame is used to represent schools missing from the list frame. The 2021-22 area frame search was conducted in 124 PSUs and identified 576 unduplicated cases, weighting up to represent 2,579 cases. Similarly, the universe frame to be used by NCES for the 2027-28 PSS will be composed of the 2027-28 PSS list frame and the 2027-28 area-search frame.

A combination of mail/internet, telephone follow-up, and personal visit follow-up modes will be used to ensure an anticipated 85 percent response rate for the 2025-26 and 2027-28 data collections (the 2021-22 PSS response rate was 76.8 percent). The 2021-22 PSS weighted response rates by type of school and percentage of interviews by mode are presented below.

2021-22 PSS Unweighted Response Rates and Percentage of Interviews by Mode				
Type of School	Weighted Response Rate	Percentage of Interviews by Paper/Internet	Percentage of Interviews by CATI Follow-up	Percentage of Interviews by Field Follow-up
All Schools	76.8%	80.4%	12.0%	7.6%
Catholic	90.9%	-	-	-
Other Religious	86.2%	-	-	-
Nonsectarian	89.2%	-	-	-

The first mailout (web invitation); see Appendix C-2) will be followed by a second mailout (web invitation and/or paper questionnaire) to nonrespondents three weeks later. The second mailout will be followed by a third mailout (pressure sealed reminder postcard) three weeks later. A fourth mailout (reminder letter with paper questionnaire) will be sent two weeks after the reminder postcard. Ten weeks after the fourth mailout, noninterview cases will be turned over to the CATI for telephone follow-up and, when necessary, to field staff for a personal follow-up visit.

### B3. Methods for Maximizing Response Rates

Although different types of private schools have different response rates, each method designed to increase response rates will be applied to all private schools. The following procedures will be employed to maximize response rates:

1. Visible support from top-level federal education officials: Top-level education department officials addressed the representatives of private school associations at an NCES-sponsored meeting that took place in April 2024. The officials demonstrated their support for the survey by informing the

representatives of the timing and objectives of the survey and by soliciting the representatives' cooperation to ensure the survey's success.

2. Endorsements by private school associations: The 2023-24 PSS was endorsed by 27 private school associations.
3. Interactive field monitoring with extensive follow-up (by telephone and personal visits) of nonrespondents: The survey will use mixed survey modes—mail/internet, telephone, and personal interviews, as needed, to maximize response levels in 2025-26 and 2027-28. Experience indicates that most surveys will be completed by mail/internet. Follow-up telephone or in-person interviews for the mail nonrespondents will be conducted to achieve an expected response rate of 85 percent. In the 2021-22 administration of PSS, 62.6% of responses were by internet, and about 80% of responses were by a self-administered mode in total (internet or mail).

In addition, the survey content is based upon administrative information that is commonly on file in private schools.

#### B4. Test of Procedures and Methods

The questionnaire and procedures will be based on those used in the 2023-24 PSS. See Appendix D for the 2025-26 PSS questionnaire.

A test to examine how private school association endorsements impact self-response rates to the 2025-26 PSS data collection will be conducted. The test will include two treatment groups and one control group. The first treatment group will receive email and mail correspondence that include the list of endorsements presented the same way as in previous PSS data collections. The second treatment group will receive email correspondence that displays endorser names, and associated logos if available. The mail correspondence for the second treatment group will include a separate insert that displays endorser names, and associated logos if available. The control group will receive email and mail correspondence that do not mention the endorsements. The endorsement test will conclude when data collection shifts to interviewer administered modes including CATI and field visits.

#### B5. Statistical Consultants, Agency Staff, and Contractors

In addition to review within NCES, Brian Kincel and James Farber of the U.S. Census Bureau reviewed the PSS sample design and related matters for statistical quality, feasibility, and suitability to the overall objectives of the survey. The following individuals have oversight of the data collection and analysis:

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## Part C. ITEM JUSTIFICATION

The questionnaire is designed to collect information concerning the number of private schools, teachers, students, and high school graduates. The questionnaire also includes items that are designed to screen out educational programs that are not private schools or do not serve students in any of grade K-12. See Appendix D for the 2025-26 PSS questionnaire.

Item 1 seeks information to identify the respondent.

Item 2 includes questions that will be used to screen out schools that are not private or do not serve students in any of grade K-12.

Item 3 provides instructions to the respondent.

Items 4 and 5 obtain information regarding the grades offered, enrollment by grade, and total enrollment. These items will be used to determine the current grades taught in private schools and to classify sampled schools as elementary/middle, secondary/high, or combined/other. Enrollment by grade (Item 4) and the total enrollment (Item 5) will be used to estimate the number of private school students by grade or grade span and the total enrollment in private schools. These data will be used in the sample selection design for other school surveys.

Item 6 asks the race and ethnicity distribution of the student body. This is a basic school descriptor and an important policy-relevant measure of minority group composition in schools. These data will be used in the sample selection design for other school surveys.

Item 7 asks if a school is coeducational, all female, or all male and, if coeducational, how many male students attend the school. This is a basic school descriptor. These data will be used in the sample selection design for other school surveys.

Item 8 asks for the number of regular high school graduates during the 2024-25 academic year and the percent that went to 4-year colleges. This is a basic school descriptor and an important policy-relevant measure.

Item 9 asks schools to indicate whether a kindergarten program is offered, and for those schools with a kindergarten program, whether it is a full- or half-day program and the number of days per week of the kindergarten program. The characteristics of kindergarten programs in private schools are important policy-relevant measures. These data will be used in the sample selection design for other school surveys.

Item 10 asks schools to indicate the number of full- and part-time teachers. This information will allow estimates of both the total number of private school teachers and the total number of full-time-equivalent teachers in private schools. These data will be used in the sample selection design for other school surveys.

Item 11 asks whether in-person, virtual, and/or hybrid classes are offered. The data from this variable will be used to estimate the types of learning modalities available to students who attend private schools and function as an intermediary variable to inform the understanding of the distribution and characteristics of private schools.

Item 12 seeks information regarding school type. This information will be used as a classification variable in analysis.

Item 13 asks the extent to which private schools support home schooling and whether schools are operated in private homes used as family residences. This question will be used to determine the prevalence of schools in private residences and will also be used (in conjunction with Item 5) to screen out families that homeschool.

Items 14 and 15 ask schools to indicate whether they have a religious orientation and to indicate to which associations they belong. These data will be used to estimate the number of Catholic, other religious, and nonsectarian schools; and to determine if schools are members of school associations. The data will also be used as a classification variable in analysis and in the sample selection design for other school surveys.

Item 16 asks for the number of days in the school year for students. These data will be used to estimate the average length of the school year for students who attend private schools.

Item 17 will obtain information about the length of the school day in private schools. These data will be used to estimate the average length of the school day for students attending private schools.

Item 18 asks schools to indicate the existence of a library/media center. This is a basic school descriptor and will be used in the sample selection design for other school surveys.

Item 19 will be used by NCES to study survey response patterns.

Item 20 will be used for updating school names and addresses. These data will be used in sample surveys and future PSS collections.

Item 21 obtains the physical or street address of the school, if different from the mailing address. This information will be used in assigning a geocode to the school location and for induplication.