Appendix A. Key Terms for SASS

The following terms are defined as they apply to the 2011–12 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS).

Affiliation stratum. SASS uses 11 categories into which all private schools are divided based on religious orientation and association membership. These categories are Catholic—parochial, Catholic—diocesan, Catholic—private, Baptist, Jewish, Lutheran, Seventh-Day Adventist, other religious, nonsectarian—regular, nonsectarian—special emphasis, and nonsectarian—special education. Schools with multiple affiliations are classified by their first affiliation in the above list. These categories represent the private school sampling strata for SASS; therefore, the SASS private school sample is designed to support estimates for each of these affiliation categories.

Base weight. This is the inverse of the initial probability of selection (termed the initial basic weight) including adjustments to the probability of selection due to schools determined to be splits or mergers during data collection operations. These adjustments to the initial probability of selection are called the sampling adjustment factor. The base weight is defined as the product of the initial basic weight and the sampling adjustment factor.

Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) school (see "School"). Meets all school criteria; operated by or under contract with the Bureau of Indian Education; reported as a BIE school by the state education agency and/or by the Bureau of Indian Education; offers services to American Indian students. BIE schools may include day schools, boarding schools, cooperative schools, and contract schools. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was recently renamed Bureau of Indian Education.

Career Technical Center (CTC). An alternative school that offers organized educational activities with a sequence of courses that provides students with the academic and technical knowledge and skills they need to prepare for further education and for careers (other than careers requiring a baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degree) in current or emerging employment sectors. The courses include competency-based applied learning that contributes to the academic knowledge, higher-order reasoning and problem solving skills, work attitudes, general employability skills, technical skills, and occupation-specific skills of the students.

Charter (or public charter) school. A charter school is a public school that, in accordance with an enabling state statute, has been granted a charter exempting it from selected state or local rules and regulations. A charter school may be a newly created school or it may previously have been a public or private school. Meets all school criteria; receives public funding as primary support; provides free public elementary and/or secondary school to eligible students.

Combined school. A school is classified as combined if it has one or more of grades K–6 and one or more of grades 9–12; for example, schools with grades K–12, 6–12, 6–9, or 1–12 were classified as having combined grades. Schools in which all students are ungraded (i.e., not classified by standard grade levels) are also classified as combined.

Common Core of Data (CCD). CCD is the Department of Education's primary database on public elementary and secondary education in the United States. CCD is a comprehensive, annual, national statistical database of all public elementary and secondary schools and school districts and contains data that are designed to be comparable across all states. The objectives of CCD are twofold: first, to provide an official listing of public elementary and secondary schools and school districts in the nation, which can be used to select samples for other National Center for Education Statistics surveys; and second, to

provide basic information and descriptive statistics on public elementary and secondary schools and schooling in general.

District. A Local Education Agency (LEA), or public school district, is defined as a government agency that employs elementary or secondary level teachers and is administratively responsible for providing public elementary and/or secondary instruction and educational support services. Districts that do not operate schools but do employ teachers are included; for example, some states have special education cooperatives that employ special education teachers who teach in schools in more than one school district. Supervisory unions are also included.

Elementary school. A school is classified as elementary if it has one or more of grades K–6 and does not have any grades higher than grade 8. For example, schools with grades K–6, 1–3, or 6–8 are classified as elementary.

Final weight. This is the product of the initial basic weight, sampling adjustment factor, separate adjustments for nonresponse at each stage of selection, and one or more stages of ratio adjustment to the frame or to independent sources. The final weight is used to produce weighted estimates from the survey data. See chapter 8 for details on the weighting procedure.

FIPS. FIPS stands for Federal Information Processing Standards and refers to a variety of codes for standardized reference. FIPS county and state codes were developed by the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) as numeric identifiers for each county and state in the United States. In 2009, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) issued a standardized set of numeric or alphabetic codes to ensure uniform identification of geographic entities through all federal government agencies. These standards replace the FIPS codes. INCITS 38 identifies state codes and replaced FIPS 5-2. INCITS 31 identifies counties and replaced FIPS 6-4. More information on the state and county codes can be found at: http://www.census.gov/geo/www/ansi/ansi.html.

Full-time equivalent. A method of counting teachers that limits the number only to those teachers whose working hours meet or exceed the number of hours prescribed by the school district for full-time employees.

High American Indian enrollment school. High American Indian enrollment schools are public schools where 19.5 percent or more of the students are American Indian or Alaska Native, as reported in the 2009–10 Common Core of Data. Schools with high American Indian enrollment were not stratified separately from other public schools for the 2011–12 SASS.

Initial basic weight. This is the inverse of the probability of selection from the initial sampling procedure. In contrast, the **base weight** is the inverse of the probability of selection covering all sampling, including any adjustments to the probability of selection due to schools determined to be splits or mergers during field operations.

Itinerant teacher. A teacher with an assignment that requires the teacher to provide instruction at more than one school.

Library media center. An organized collection of printed and/or audiovisual and/or computer resources which is administered as a unit, is located in a designated place or places, and makes resources and services available to students, teachers, and administrators. A Library Media Center may be called a library, media center, resource center, information center, instructional materials center, learning resource center, or any other similar name.

Missing data. SASS is a fully imputed dataset. Consequently, the only survey items that lack responses are either those that are part of a skip pattern and should not have been answered by a particular respondent or write-in responses, which include data too specific to reasonably impute from another respondent's data. Data pulled from the frame (i.e., the Common Core of Data or the Private School Universe Survey) are not necessarily imputed for missing data. In these instances, a value of -9, indicating missing data, is provided for that variable.

Principal. A principal is the administrator who has primary responsibility of the overall day-to-day functioning of the school.

Private school (see "School"). Meets all school criteria; does not receive public funding as primary support; does not operate within the public school system.

Private School Universe Survey (PSS). PSS is a biennial survey designed to collect data from all K–12 private schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. It is the universe from which the sample for the private school component of SASS is selected.

Public school (see "School"). A public school is defined as an institution that provides educational services for at least one of grades 1–12 (or comparable ungraded levels), has one or more teachers to give instruction, is located in one or more buildings, receives public funds as primary support, and is operated by an education agency. Public charter schools, schools in juvenile detention centers, and schools located on domestic military bases and operated by the Department of Defense are included.

Sampling adjustment factor. In the weighting process for each SASS respondent, the sampling adjustment factor is applied to the initial basic weight to account for any additional circumstances affecting the probability of selection. The product of the initial basic weight and the sampling adjustment factor is the base weight. See the definitions for initial basic weight and base weight.

School. An institution or part of an institution that has one or more teachers who provide instruction to students, has students in one or more of grades 1–12 (or the ungraded equivalent), has its own principal/administrator if it shares a building with another school or institution, is in operation during the 2011–12 school year, and is NOT primarily a postsecondary or adult basic education institution. The following are NOT considered a school: schools located exclusively in a private home, Department of Defense (DoD) schools located outside of the US, offices of special education in an LEA, tutoring services, homeschool clearing houses, and adult learning facilities.

School head. A school head is defined as the person holding presiding rank at the school, who assumes final responsibility for the overall operation of the institution.

Secondary school. A school is classified as secondary if it has one or more of grades 7–12 and does not have any grade lower than grade 7. For example, schools with grades 9–12, 10–12, or 7–8 are classified as secondary.

State school. State schools are typically run by a State Department of Education and are not overseen by a district (e.g., schools in juvenile detention centers, schools for the blind, etc.).

Teachers. A teacher is defined as a full-time or part-time teacher who teaches any regularly scheduled classes in any of grades K–12. This includes administrators, librarians, and other professional or support staff that teach regularly scheduled classes on a part-time basis. Itinerant teachers are included, as well as long-term substitutes who are filling the role of a regular teacher on a long-term basis. An itinerant teacher is defined as a teacher who teaches at more than one school (e.g., a music teacher who teaches 3

days per week at one school and 2 days per week at another). Short-term substitute teachers and student teachers are not included.

Traditional public school. Traditional public schools are publicly-funded schools other than public charter schools. They include regular, special education, vocational/technical, and alternative schools. They also include schools in juvenile detention centers and domestic schools located on military bases and operated by the Department of Defense. See also the definitions for public and public charter schools.

Typology, private school. Private schools were assigned to one of three major categories (i.e., Catholic, other religious, and nonsectarian). Within each of these major categories, three additional subcategories were assigned. As a result, two typology-based variables exist on the private sector data files; a "3-level typology" (RELIG) and a "9-level typology" (TYPOLOGY). The categories and subcategories are
1. Catholic—parochial, diocesan, and private;
2. Other religious—conservative Christian, affiliated with a religious school association, and not affiliated with a religious school association; and
3. Nonsectarian—regular, special program emphasis, and special education.

Ungraded. Refers to schools that have an alternative means of classifying students, other than by grade level.

Ungraded students. Ungraded students are those who are not assigned to a particular grade level (kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, etc.); for example, special education centers and alternative schools often classify their students as ungraded. Students in Montessori schools are also considered ungraded if the school assigns them to "primary" and "intermediate" levels instead of specific grades.

Valid skip. An item that was not applicable due to a response to a previous item on the same questionnaire and was provided with a value of -8, indicating a valid skip. Certain survey items direct respondents to skip subsequent items based on their answers to the original item, or stem. For instance, if a respondent answered "No" to item 12a on the School Questionnaire ("Does this school have a kindergarten?"), he or she was directed to skip items 12b and 12c (respectively, "How long is the school day for a kindergarten, transitional kindergarten, or transitional first grade student?" and "How many days per week does a kindergarten, transitional kindergarten, or transitional first grade student attend?") and to "GO TO item 13 below." Because the respondent answered that the school in question does not have a kindergarten, subsequent questions about kindergarten students at that school were not applicable. In instances when an item should not have been answered by the respondent, a value of -8, which designates a valid skip, is applied to that variable(s).

Appendix B. Questionnaire Availability
Online, Downloadable PDF Files

Questionnaires for every data collection component in every survey cycle since the first 1987–88 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the first 1988–89 Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) are available online as downloadable PDF files at

http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/questionnaire.asp.

Select the survey year of interest and then proceed to select the specific questionnaire to browse or download. The Teacher Listing Form is the form that gathers the data used to select the teacher sample. While no data from this form are reported publicly, the questionnaire form is available on the SASS website for those interested in survey methodology.

Following the 2011-12 SASS administration, the survey will be redesigned as the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS). NTPS will be collected on a 2-year survey cycle starting in 2015-16. Public-use data will be available through an online tool called PowerStats. PowerStats is accessible for no charge on the NCES website at:

http://nces.ed.gov/datalab/sass/.

All of the SASS and TFS questionnaires are in the public domain. All survey items may be copied by anyone who wishes to use them in another survey, without any restrictions.

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Appendix C. Poverty Analysis for SASS 2011–12 Public School Sample

This appendix contains a report prepared by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), Education Statistics Services Institute (ESSI). Its contents are listed below.

Introduction

In order to evaluate efficiency of sampling public schools by poverty status in preparation for SASS 2011–12, ESSI performed several analyses on the SASS 2007–08 data. Using several tests to determine the representation and efficiency of the sample, two definitions of high-poverty schools were used: 1) schools with at least 50 percent free or reduced-price lunch enrollment, and 2) schools with at least 75 percent free or reduced-price lunch enrollment. These two definitions of high-poverty schools were used to examine the distribution of high poverty across several reporting domains, as well as the distribution of key analysis variables, as defined by NCES. Because no standard definition of poverty in the SASS target population is currently in use by NCES or the research community, this analysis incorporated two definitions to ensure the results reported here were not sensitive to a particular definition.

In summary, the analysis shows that while the 2007–08 SASS sample adequately represents high-poverty schools, marginal improvements to the representation can be made at low costs. Therefore, ESSI recommends purposely improving the distribution of high-poverty public schools through adding the free and reduced price lunch variable to the sample sort.

Details on the analyses, findings, and recommendations can be found below.

Coefficients of Variation (CV)

ESSI calculated point estimates, standard errors, and CVs for key estimates, within reporting domains, by both high-poverty definitions. The purpose of this analysis was to help quantify comments on the limitations of high-poverty estimates through a comparison with NCES standards.

The key analysis variables analyzed were: enrollment, total number of teachers, percent minority students, hours per week spent on all school-related activities, average class size, and highest degree earned. The reporting domains used in this analysis include the following variables, several of which are SASS stratification variables: school type, region, community type, school grade level (both 3 and 4 categories), teaching experience, teacher employment status, state, and certainty states. CVs were then calculated and compared between the two high-poverty definitions. Table C-1 shows summary statistics for the CV analysis.

Table C-1. **Summary statistics for coefficients of variation, by high-poverty definition: 2007–08**

High-poverty definition	Median coefficient of variation	Percent of coefficients of variation 15 percent or higher	Percent of coefficients of variation 30 percent or higher
Schools with 50 percent or more free or reduced-price lunch	12.5	38.5	3.1
Schools with 75 percent or more free or reduced-price lunch	14.7	48.5	5.4

NOTE: The 2007–08 SASS sample was designed to produce key estimates with coefficients of variation 15 percent or less. Estimates with coefficients of variation 30 percent or higher are flagged as unstable. Estimates in this table represent key estimates calculated within key reporting domains, by poverty level. Estimates with cell sizes less than 30 unweighted observations were excluded from this analysis.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School and Public School Teacher Data File," 2007–08.

As shown in table C-1, at least 51 percent of the estimates studied in this analysis had a relatively precise CV (below 15 percent[1]) regardless of the poverty definition examined. The converse indicates that at least 39 percent of the estimates studied could be judged by the user community as being less than ideal. The percent of estimates exceeding the desired level of 15 percent is naturally larger for the more restrictive definition (75 percent of more) because the number of schools meeting this criterion is smaller.

Given the sample design aimed for CVs of 15 percent or less, the table C-1 results show that the SASS 2007–08 adequately represents schools with high poverty levels for many of the key SASS estimates. However, the representation could be expanded.

Using Regression Analysis to Analyze CV Associations

A large number of CVs were produced for the analyses summarized in table C-1 including overall estimates and estimates by reporting domain. To test whether high CVs are associated with the high-poverty categories for the two definitions, overall and then controlling for reporting domains, ESSI conducted a series of regression models using the CV as the dependent variable (table C-2). The 'all domains' row estimates the effect of poverty on the CV of key estimates calculated within all reporting domains, while the other rows estimate this same effect within specific reporting domains. For example, the 'within region' row for schools with 50 percent or more free or reduced-price lunch has a regression coefficient of 2.3, which is significant at the $p<.001$ level. This means that even after controlling for region, high-poverty schools (using this definition) are still significantly associated with higher CVs in comparison with non-high-poverty schools.

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[1] A coefficient of variation (CV) of 15 percent or less has been used as the desired level of precision since the development of the 1990–91 SASS sample design.

Table C-2.   Regression coefficients and standard errors for two poverty measures regressed on the coefficients of variation associated with key estimates: 2007–08

Poverty measure	Regression coefficient	Standard error of regression coefficient
Schools with 50 percent or more free or reduced-price lunch enrollment		
All domains	1.7 ***	0.27
Within region	2.4 *	0.92
Within urbanicity	2.6 **	0.93
Within four-category school level	2.5 *	0.96
Within three-category school level	1.9	1.10
Within teacher years experience	2.5 *	1.17
Within teacher employment status	4.3 *	1.95
Within state	2.1 ***	0.33
Schools with 75 percent or more free or reduced-price lunch enrollment		
All domains	4.6 ***	0.30
Within region	6.5 ***	1.00
Within urbanicity	8.1 ***	1.00
Within four-category school level	7.7 ***	1.06
Within three-category school level	7.8 ***	1.19
Within teacher years experience	7.5 ***	1.15
Within teacher employment status	6.4 **	2.09
Within state	4.1 ***	0.44

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School and Public School Teacher Data File," 2007–08.

Table C-2 shows that high-poverty school estimates are significantly associated with higher CVs for key estimates in all but one reporting domain (three-category school level for schools with 50 percent or more FRPL enrollment). However, the strength of the association is not completely consistent across the definitions. This suggests that the current SASS stratification variables are not sufficient to increase the representation of high-poverty schools and that a high-poverty variable should be introduced to the 2011–12 SASS design.

Response Rate Comparisons

Sample design optimization determines the minimum number of units (e.g., schools or teachers) required to meet a set of analytic objectives. This minimum size must be inflated to account for sample loss associated with nonresponse. Lower response rates among high-poverty schools could introduce difficulties for improving their representation in the sample, possibly requiring oversampling.

In order to determine if high-poverty schools responded at lower rates than non-high-poverty schools, ESSI calculated base-weighted response rates and compared the rates between the two definitions of high poverty schools. Response rates were calculated within domain levels in order to facilitate the comparison of different types of schools. In most instances, high-poverty schools had about the same response rate as non-high-poverty schools, and in several instances, notably CTC schools, charter schools, and schools in the Northeast, response rates were actually higher than non-high-poverty schools. Response rates were lower for high-poverty schools for only a few domain levels, most notably in towns. Overall, ESSI found

that response rates were not lower for high-poverty schools, and therefore differential response rates among high-poverty schools should not be an issue for the SASS 2011–12 public-school sample.

Comparison of School Sample Frame and Restricted-Use Files

In order to show how close the distribution of high poverty among the respondents matches the distribution of high poverty in the population, ESSI compared the distribution of high-poverty schools in the public school sample frame file and the final-weighted restricted-use file. In other words, do the levels of poverty in the respondents accurately represent the levels of poverty in the population? Table C-3 displays the proportion of schools with high poverty enrollment, within key domain levels, on the sample frame and restricted-use file.

Table C-3.   Percentage of high-poverty schools on the SASS sample frame and restricted-use file, by reporting domain and high-poverty definition: 2007–08

Reporting domain	50 percent or more free or reduced-price lunch enrollment			75 percent or more free or reduced-price lunch enrollment		
	Sample frame	Restricted-use file	Absolute difference	Sample frame	Restricted-use file	Absolute difference
School type						
CTC school	3.9	7.7	3.8	2.0	7.7	5.7
Charter	37.0	48.3	11.3	21.1	26.1	5.0
Regular	37.9	41.5	3.5	16.5	19.6	3.1
Region						
Northeast	27.9	26.9	1.0	14.7	14.3	0.4
Midwest	26.2	31.4	5.1	11.2	12.8	1.6
South	48.7	53.3	4.6	19.7	23.9	4.2
West	40.3	46.6	6.3	19.1	25.8	6.7
Community type						
City	56.6	61.4	4.8	34.0	39.8	5.8
Suburb	25.9	29.5	3.6	10.2	12.3	2.0
Town	38.4	45.9	7.5	11.6	19.0	7.4
Rural	31.0	35.9	4.9	9.3	12.3	3.0
School level						
Elementary	43.7	45.6	1.9	20.0	21.7	1.7
Secondary	25.3	28.2	2.9	9.1	12.7	3.6
Combined	23.3	48.8	25.5	10.3	25.4	15.1
School level						
Elementary	44.7	46.5	1.7	21.1	22.9	1.9
Middle	38.7	40.8	2.1	14.8	16.6	1.9
High	24.0	27.1	3.1	8.6	12.0	3.4
Combined	23.1	48.8	25.8	10.2	25.4	15.2
State						
Alabama	52.5	55.0	2.5	23.4	30.4	7.0
Alaska	37.0	46.5	9.5	19.6	36.5	17.0
Arizona	44.5	49.8	5.3	28.7	24.1	4.6
Arkansas	50.5	58.7	8.2	15.6	20.2	4.5
California	47.5	54.5	7.0	24.7	34.9	10.1

See notes at end of table.

Table C-3.   Percentage of high-poverty schools on the SASS sample frame and restricted-use file, by reporting domain and high-poverty definition: 2007–08—Continued

Reporting domain	50 percent or more free or reduced-price lunch enrollment			75 percent or more free or reduced-price lunch enrollment		
	Sample frame	Restricted-use file	Absolute difference	Sample frame	Restricted-use file	Absolute difference
Colorado	30.8	35.7	4.9	11.2	16.1	4.9
Connecticut	22.8	17.5	5.3	8.7	7.3	1.4
Delaware	22.6	36.8	14.2	1.3	16.0	14.6
District of Columbia	63.5	72.6	9.0	36.0	38.8	2.8
Florida	46.8	47.3	0.5	17.9	16.9	1.0
Georgia	49.9	50.4	0.5	21.1	24.5	3.3
Hawaii	37.0	33.9	3.0	9.5	7.4	2.1
Idaho	29.5	50.1	20.6	5.4	22.7	17.3
Illinois	31.4	39.0	7.6	17.6	21.6	4.0
Indiana	28.2	26.5	1.6	9.9	6.4	3.6
Iowa	15.5	18.0	2.6	2.7	6.5	3.8
Kansas	31.4	38.0	6.6	8.8	9.2	0.4
Kentucky	58.5	64.5	6.0	26.0	20.8	5.3
Louisiana	67.5	63.3	4.2	34.7	37.2	2.5
Maine	27.1	33.7	6.6	3.4	6.0	2.6
Maryland	30.1	41.2	11.1	11.2	15.5	4.3
Massachusetts	26.4	28.1	1.7	13.0	10.9	2.1
Michigan	30.1	35.7	5.6	13.9	14.9	1.0
Minnesota	20.4	24.8	4.4	9.9	7.2	2.6
Mississippi	72.0	77.9	5.9	47.0	47.9	0.9
Missouri	33.5	43.5	10.0	12.1	15.5	3.3
Montana	13.5	26.6	13.1	4.4	10.9	6.5
Nebraska	18.6	21.5	2.8	4.1	8.1	4.0
Nevada	34.5	40.3	5.8	14.6	14.7	0.1
New Hampshire	3.0	8.4	5.4	0.0	1.4	1.4
New Jersey	21.8	15.5	6.3	8.9	3.6	5.3
New Mexico	59.3	67.7	8.5	29.8	46.7	16.9
New York	40.2	38.1	2.1	26.1	31.0	4.9
North Carolina	45.0	54.1	9.1	12.7	19.9	7.2
North Dakota	10.0	17.3	7.3	2.4	6.1	3.7
Ohio	27.3	27.0	0.4	11.8	11.4	0.4
Oklahoma	55.0	59.0	4.0	23.9	25.0	1.1
Oregon	42.1	59.8	17.7	10.3	12.8	2.5
Pennsylvania	22.8	23.8	1.0	11.3	7.7	3.6
Rhode Island	30.1	25.5	4.6	17.6	11.9	5.7

See notes at end of table.

Table C-3.   Percentage of high-poverty schools on the SASS sample frame and restricted-use file, by reporting domain and high-poverty definition: 2007–08—Continued

Reporting domain	50 percent or more free or reduced-price lunch enrollment			75 percent or more free or reduced-price lunch enrollment		
	Sample frame	Restricted-use file	Absolute difference	Sample frame	Restricted-use file	Absolute difference
South Carolina	57.1	60.0	2.9	24.1	22.6	1.5
South Dakota	17.4	30.7	13.3	9.6	22.5	12.9
Tennessee	53.2	62.9	9.7	19.0	14.7	4.3
Texas	46.4	52.4	6.0	19.3	30.7	11.3
Utah	20.0	24.5	4.5	7.1	10.8	3.7
Vermont	11.4	19.4	8.0	1.1	0.9	0.3
Virginia	26.4	28.2	1.8	5.7	5.5	0.2
Washington	28.0	24.4	3.6	9.2	13.2	4.0
West Virginia	56.9	57.7	0.8	8.9	12.2	3.3
Wisconsin	17.3	25.8	8.5	6.8	10.2	3.4
Wyoming	20.1	17.4	2.7	4.9	2.7	2.2

NOTE: Percentages represent the percent of all schools within each domain level that have high levels of poverty.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Sample and Public School Data File," 2007–08.

Many domain percentages were similar, within 5 percent, on the sample frame and the interview population. Of the 71 domain levels compared, 35 (49.3 percent) were more than 5 percent different between the sample frame and interview population, when comparing schools with 50 percent or more students receiving free or reduced-price lunch. However, 19 (26.8 percent) were more than 5 percent different when comparing schools with 75 percent or more students receiving free or reduced-price lunch.

For most domains in table C-3, the 2007–08 SASS analysis file contained a higher proportion of high-poverty schools than exhibited in the target population. This oversampling of high-poverty schools inherent in the current SASS sample design could be further expanded through its addition as a sorting variable. Further analysis will be conducted prior to implementation to ensure that such as change would not negatively impact the precision of schools outside the high-poverty category.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The analyses above show that the representation of poverty is adequate for a majority of the estimates and domains calculated, but could be improved for others. The regression models show that a high percentage of free and reduced-price lunch is associated with less precise estimates (larger CVs); improving the representation of poverty in the sample should reduce this association. Additionally, because the response rates are comparable for high- and non-high-poverty schools, the allocation of sample to this former category does not need to be explicitly controlled through its use as a stratification variable.

Therefore, ESSI recommends adding free or reduced-price lunch as a sort variable prior to sample selection to improve the representation of high-poverty schools in the SASS 2011–12 sample. This recommendation is a lower-cost option than adding another level of stratification which is almost guaranteed to increase the overall sample of schools required for the design. The precision of key estimates for the high-poverty schools will be controlled in expectation through a sample design optimization.

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Appendix D. Bureau of Indian Education-Funded Schools and Career and Technology Centers Sampling Change

This appendix contains a report prepared by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), Education Statistics Services Institute (ESSI). Its contents are listed below.

Introduction

Although NCES decided to discontinue the separate stratification of Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools and Career and Technology Centers (CTC) from the SASS 2011–12 sample design, ESSI investigated the impact on the sample if these schools were included on the sampling frame without special treatment. In other words, these schools would no longer be sampled at higher rates, but would remain in the SASS target population. In order to estimate the effect of removing the BIE and CTC strata, ESSI performed an analysis using the SASS 2007–08 public school sampling frame.

In general, no problems were found using the new stratification. BIE sample counts decreased to those appropriate to their population proportion. CTC representation in the sample increased, while the representation of all other public schools in the sample was not significantly affected by the new stratification. Therefore, ESSI recommends keeping BIE schools and CTCs on the sampling frame. Details on the analysis can be found below. ESSI also examined poverty distributions among the three school types to ensure school poverty representation would not be affected by the stratification change. Information on this analysis can be found in Attachment D-1.

New Stratification and Probabilities of Selection

After dropping CTCs, BIE schools, and schools with high American Indian enrollment, the new strata include three main levels: (1) schools in Delaware, Maryland, Florida, Nevada, and West Virginia, (2) public charter schools, and (3) all other public schools. Type (1) schools were further stratified by district and by four-level school level. Type (2) schools were further stratified by state or region and then by school level. Finally, type (3) schools were further stratified by state and then by school level.

For the analysis, ESSI classified the SASS 2007–08 public school sampling frame using the new stratification levels. The 2007–08 sampling frame was used for two reasons. One, the 2007–08 sampling frame had already been prepared for SASS sampling (e.g., removing schools with zero enrollment and schools outside the 50 states and the District of Columbia, etc.), which saved time by avoiding all of these edits on a newer CCD public school file. Second, ESSI could use the sample allocations from 2007–08 to estimate the number of BIE and CTC schools sampled without the BIE and CTC strata. This allowed us to recreate the 2007–08 sample with the new stratification, without creating a new sample allocation.

This new stratification was applied to the 2007–08 frame and sample, which were used to determine the number of schools on the frame and the number of schools sampled within each new stratification level. These sample counts were then used to calculate the probability of selection for each school on the frame:

$$\pi_{hi} = \frac{m_h S_{hi}}{S_{h+}}$$

where h = first-stage stratum index ($h = 1, \dots, H$);
 i = school index within stratum h;
 m_h = number of schools to be selected in stratum h;
 S_{hi} = $\sqrt{FTE_{hi}}$, the size measure for school hi defined as the square root of full-time equivalent teacher variable from CCD;
 S_{h+} = $\sum_{i=1}^{M_h} S_{hi}$, the sum of the size measures within stratum h; and
 M_h = total number of schools in stratum h.

This formula produces the probability of selection for each school on the frame, determined by the number of schools selected within the given strata (m_h), the square root of the schools number of full-time equivalent teachers (S_{hi}), and the sum of the square roots of FTE teachers within the given strata (S_{h+}). FTE is used as a size of measurement for each school. This school-level probability of selection has been used for several rounds of SASS.

The individual probabilities of selection for each school were then summed within each stratum using the following formula:

$$\hat{m}_{kh} = \sum_{i=1}^{M_{hi}} \delta_{khi}\, \pi_{hi}$$

where k = school analysis domain index (k = 1 [BIE], 2 [CTC], and 3 [Other public schools]);
          $\hat{m}_{kh}$ = expected sample size for domain k within stratum h; and
          δ_{khi} = zero-one indicator to identify schools in the relevant domain.

This formula gives us the expected number of schools sampled within each strata level, by school type. Table D-1 displays the expected sample sizes and original sample sizes for BIE, CTC, and all other public schools by reporting domains.

Table D-1.   Expected and original sample sizes for BIE, CTC, and all other public schools by reporting domains: 2007–08

Reporting domain	Expected sample size[1]			Original 2007–08 sample size		
	BIE schools	CTC schools	All other schools	BIE schools	CTC schools	All other schools
United States	49	158	9,753	178	131	9,664
Region						
Northeast	0	44	1,434	3	38	1,438
Midwest	13	24	2,378	45	19	2,354
South	4	78	3,207	17	62	3,213
West	31	12	2,733	113	12	2,659
Community type						
City	2	26	2,480	4	21	2,401
Suburb	1	30	2,362	5	30	2,313
Town	5	39	1,659	16	33	1,690
Rural	41	63	3,252	153	47	3,260
School level						
Elementary	22	†	3,806	102	0	3,726
Middle	1	0	1,248	5	0	1,245
High	7	144	3,381	20	117	3,405
Combined	18	13	1,318	51	14	1,288
Charter status						
Traditional public school	49	158	9,370	178	131	9,280
Charter school	†	†	384	0	0	384

See notes at end of table.

Table D-1.   Expected and original sample sizes for BIE, CTC, and all other public schools, by reporting domains: 2007–08—Continued

Reporting domain	Expected sample size[1]			Original 2007–08 sample size		
	BIE schools	CTC schools	All other schools	BIE schools	CTC schools	All other schools
School enrollment						
Less than 100	2	11	630	13	12	635
100–199	18	24	840	52	16	825
200–499	16	62	3,373	53	58	3,397
500–749	11	30	2,084	57	23	2,012
750–999	0	11	1,033	2	8	1,007
1,000 or more	1	19	1,794	1	14	1,788
Percent of K–12 students who were approved for free or reduced-price lunches						
0–34	†	18	4,361	0	18	4.316
35–39	†	3	1,704	0	2	1,638
50–74	†	3	1,871	0	3	1,883
75 or more	†	2	1,230	0	3	1,237
School did not participate in free or reduced-price lunch program or missing	49	131	587	178	105	590
State						
Alabama	†	7	173	0	6	174
Alaska	†	1	196	0	2	197
Arizona	11	1	300	51	1	261
Arkansas	†	5	182	0	6	181
California	0	3	465	2	4	462
Colorado	†	†	175	0	0	175
Connecticut	†	†	179	0	0	179
Delaware	†	†	127	0	0	128
District of Columbia	†	†	119	0	0	119
Florida	2	5	254	2	4	255
Georgia	†	†	170	0	0	170
Hawaii	†	†	96	0	0	96
Idaho	1	2	185	2	3	183
Illinois	†	1	181	0	0	181
Indiana	†	3	180	0	0	183
Iowa	0	†	162	1	0	161
Kansas	0	†	165	1	0	166
Kentucky	†	8	158	0	6	160
Louisiana	0	1	169	1	2	167
Maine	0	8	168	3	7	167

See notes at end of table.

**Table D-1.   Expected and original sample sizes for BIE, CTC, and all other public schools, by
reporting domains: 2007–08—Continued**

Reporting domain	Expected sample size[1]			Original 2007–08 sample size		
	BIE schools	CTC schools	All other schools	BIE schools	CTC schools	All other schools
Maryland	†	4	174	0	4	174
Massachusetts	†	0	182	0	1	181
Michigan	0	4	228	2	4	227
Minnesota	1	1	282	4	2	278
Mississippi	1	9	159	8	9	152
Missouri	†	6	209	0	6	209
Montana	0	†	183	2	0	183
Nebraska	†	†	198	0	0	198
Nevada	2	†	166	2	0	166
New Hampshire	†	11	123	0	11	124
New Jersey	†	6	163	0	5	164
New Mexico	13	†	246	41	0	220
New York	†	3	182	0	3	182
North Carolina	0	1	191	2	1	189
North Dakota	6	2	198	13	0	194
Ohio	†	6	187	0	7	186
Oklahoma	1	15	340	4	5	349
Oregon	0	0	189	1	0	189
Pennsylvania	†	6	183	0	5	184
Rhode Island	†	1	125	0	0	126
South Carolina	†	7	166	0	9	163
South Dakota	6	†	187	21	0	173
Tennessee	†	2	160	0	2	159
Texas	†	1	277	0	0	278
Utah	1	3	187	3	1	187
Vermont	†	8	129	0	6	131
Virginia	†	5	221	0	1	225
Washington	1	1	197	8	1	190
West Virginia	†	9	168	0	7	170
Wisconsin	0	1	200	3	0	198
Wyoming	1	†	148	1	0	150

† Not applicable; no expected schools in sample.
[1]Expected sample size represents the summation of the probability of selection for all schools within the reporting domain under the new stratification levels.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Sample Frame File" and "Public School Sample File," 2007–08.

The expected sample size columns in table D-1 represent the total number of schools expected to be sampled within each of the three reporting domains (BIE, CTC, and All other) using population counts from the 2007–08 sampling frame and the proposed changes to the design strata. The last three columns display the number of schools actually sampled using the original 2007–08 stratification, which included strata for BIE and CTC schools.

The largest difference between the new expected sample counts and the original sample counts is for BIE schools. If BIE schools are sampled, rather than taken with certainty, we expect to select around 50 BIE schools, much less than the 178 selected for the 2007–08 study.

The number of CTC schools expected to be sampled under the new stratification is actually larger than the number originally sampled in 2007–08. The total number of CTC sample schools expected under the new stratification is 158, whereas there were only 131 originally sampled in 2007–08. This is most likely the result of some CTC schools having larger FTE counts than other public schools. The median FTE count for CTC schools is 2.45, whereas the median FTE count for all other public schools is 1.00, which results in a mean probability of selection of 0.16 for CTC schools and 0.10 for all other public schools. Thus, CTC schools, on average, have a higher probability of selection than the other public schools.

Only minor changes were observed in the difference of expected to original sample sizes for all other public schools. These changes reflect the removal of the BIE and CTC school stratification levels.

Expected Counts After Nonresponse Adjustment

Table D-2 displays the expected response counts and the number of responding schools in 2007–08. The expected response counts were derived by multiplying the expected sample sizes by the nonresponse rate in 2007–08. This shows how many schools we would expect to respond using the new stratification levels.

Table D-2.   Expected response counts after adjustment for nonresponse and original response counts for BIE, CTC, and all other public schools, by reporting domains: 2007–08

	Expected response count[1]			Original 2007–08 response count		
Reporting domain	BIE schools	CTC schools	All other schools	BIE schools	CTC schools	All other schools
United States	36	113	7,547	131	93	7,479
Region						
Northeast	0	31	1,077	2	27	1,080
Midwest	10	19	1,851	35	15	1,832
South	3	59	2,257	13	47	2,562
West	22	4	2,061	81	4	2,005
Community type						
City	1	16	1,706	3	13	1,652
Suburb	1	21	1,709	5	21	1,673
Town	3	30	1,382	11	25	1,408
Rural	30	45	2,739	112	34	2,746
School level						
Elementary	17	†	3,009	80	0	2,946
Middle	1	†	983	5	0	980
High	4	104	2,579	12	84	2,597
Combined	12	9	978	34	9	956
Charter status						
Traditional public school	36	112	7,294	131	93	7,224
Charter school	†	†	255			255

See notes at end of table.

Table D-2. Expected response counts after adjustment for nonresponse and original response counts for BIE, CTC, and all other public schools, by reporting domains: 2007–08— Continued

	Expected response count[1]			Original 2007–08 response count		
Reporting domain	BIE schools	CTC schools	All other schools	BIE schools	CTC schools	All other schools
School enrollment						
Less than 100	1	7	457	7	7	461
100–199	14	18	653	41	12	642
200–499	11	44	2,702	37	41	2,721
500–749	8	24	1,638	43	18	1,581
750–999	0	7	778	2	5	758
1,000 or more	1	13	1,320	1	10	1,316
Percent of K–12 students who were approved for free or reduced-price lunches						
0–34	†	15	3,440	0	15	3,404
35–49	†	3	1,361	0	2	1,308
50–74	†	2	1,502	0	2	1,511
75 or more	†	1	933	0	1	938
School did not participate in free or reduced-price lunch program or missing	36	91	316	131	73	318
State						
Alabama	†	6	161	0	5	162
Alaska	†	1	133	0	1	134
Arizona	8	†	204	36	0	177
Arkansas	†	3	152	0	3	152
California	0	2	329	2	2	327
Colorado	†	†	135	0	0	135
Connecticut	†	†	116	0	0	116
Delaware	†	†	92	0	0	93
District of Columbia	†	†	82	0	0	82
Florida	1	2	202	1	2	203
Georgia	†	†	145	0	0	145
Hawaii	†	†	83	0	0	83
Idaho	0	†	158	1	0	156
Illinois	†	†	149	0	0	149
Indiana	†	†	140	0	0	143
Iowa	0	†	131	1	0	130
Kansas	0	†	138	1	0	139
Kentucky	†	7	128	0	5	129
Louisiana	†	1	131	0	1	130
Maine	0	6	137	2	5	136

See notes at end of table.

Table D-2.   Expected response counts after adjustment for nonresponse and original response counts for BIE, CTC, and all other public schools by reporting domains: 2007–08— Continued

Reporting domain	Expected response count[1]			Original 2007–08 response count		
	BIE schools	CTC schools	All other schools	BIE schools	CTC schools	All other schools
Maryland	†	3	98	0	3	98
Massachusetts	†	†	135	0	0	134
Michigan	0	3	147	2	3	146
Minnesota	1	†	214	4	0	211
Mississippi	1	9	150	8	9	144
Missouri	†	5	181	0	5	181
Montana	0	†	163	2	0	163
Nebraska	†	†	137	0	0	137
Nevada	2	†	127	2	0	127
New Hampshire	†	10	108	0	10	109
New Jersey	†	3	116	0	3	116
New Mexico	10	†	181	31	0	162
New York	†	†	128	0	0	128
North Carolina	0	1	148	2	1	147
North Dakota	5	†	161	11	0	158
Ohio	†	6	134	0	7	133
Oklahoma	0	12	296	2	4	304
Oregon	0	†	136	1	0	136
Pennsylvania	†	5	142	0	4	143
Rhode Island	†	†	89	0	0	89
South Carolina	†	5	140	0	7	138
South Dakota	4	†	154	13	0	142
Tennessee	†	1	126	0	1	125
Texas	†	†	200	0	0	200
Utah	0	†	140	1	0	140
Vermont	†	7	107	0	5	109
Virginia	†	5	153	0	1	156
Washington	1	1	146	4	1	141
West Virginia	†	6	152	0	5	154
Wisconsin	0	†	165	3	0	163
Wyoming	1	†	123	1	0	124

† Not applicable; no expected schools in sample.
[1]Expected response count represents the summation of the probability of selection for all schools within the reporting domain under the new stratification levels, adjusting for the 2007–08 nonresponse rate.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Sample Frame File" and "Public School Sample File," 2007–08.

As in table D-1, the largest difference between expected responses and original response counts is for BIE schools. Under the new stratification, only 36 BIE schools are expected to respond, versus 131 responding BIE schools in the 2007–08 sample. We still see an increase in the number of CTC schools responding, and a relatively small increase for all other public schools.

Conclusions

In summary, the BIE schools are most affected by the change in stratification. After controlling for nonresponse, there is an expected drop of 73 percent of responding BIE schools, which reflects the change from certainty sampling to probability sampling. While this will preclude producing national estimates for BIE schools, this drop in the number of BIE schools is expected given their very small population size. BIE schools will still be represented in the overall public-school survey estimates.

The representation of CTC schools is not harmed by the stratification change. Rather, their representation will increase in expectation. After controlling for nonresponse, the expected counts increased 22 percent of responding CTC schools. As mentioned above, this appears to be a result of a skewed distribution of FTE counts. Finally, there was only a 0.01 percent change in the expected number of responding other public schools. Slight changes include more schools responding in the West and more City schools responding. Overall, ESSI recommends including BIE schools and CTCs on the sampling frame without special treatment.

Attachment D-1. Poverty Distribution Among School Types

NCES decided to include free and reduced-price lunch enrollment in the sample sort for SASS 2011–12 in order to improve representation of school poverty. If BIE schools or CTCs have high proportions of schools with high poverty rates, the representation of high-poverty schools could be damaged by not sampling BIE schools and CTCs at higher rates. Table D-3 displays the high-poverty and not-high poverty distributions for BIE schools, CTCs, and all other public schools on the 2007–08 sampling frame, using a threshold of 50 percent of students participating in free and reduced-price lunch. This threshold was used to obtain a conservative estimate of the number of high-poverty schools. Although unable to simulate free lunch in the sample sort in the analysis above, table D-3 contains distributions of poverty.

Table D-3.   Distribution of high poverty, by school type on the SASS sampling frame: 2007–08

| | High poverty indicator[1] | | | | | |
| | Missing/Not applicable | | Not high poverty | | High poverty | |
School type	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All public schools	6,655	7.0	52,362	55.4	35,420	37.5
BIE schools	178	2.7	†	†	†	†
CTC schools	846	12.7	121	0.2	39	0.1
Other public schools	5,631	84.6	52,241	99.8	35,381	99.9

† Not applicable.
[1]High poverty is defined as a school with 50 percent or higher free/reduced-price lunch enrollment.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Sample Frame File" and "Public School Sample File," 2007–08.

BIE schools did not report free and reduced-price lunch enrollment, so the distribution of poverty could not be measured. But with a total of 178 BIE schools, the BIE sector represents only 0.2 percent of all public schools. Approximately 40 CTCs were high-poverty schools, representing only 0.1 percent of all high-poverty public schools (table A-1). Therefore, given the small population of BIE schools overall, and the small proportion of CTCs with high-poverty, there should be no negative effect on the representation of high-poverty schools in the 2011–12 sample by using the new stratification.

Appendix E. 2011–12 SASS Redesign—Precision Analysis

This appendix contains a report prepared by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), Education Statistics Services Institute (ESSI). Its contents are listed below.

Introduction

The purpose of this memo is to summarize the analysis results to evaluate levels of precision for the 2011–12 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) sample allocation. The first section briefly discusses how precision is defined in SASS. The second section discusses precision at the school level using data collected from the 2007–08 SASS questionnaires. Finally, the third section describes precision for estimates from the 2007–08 SASS teacher instruments.

Determining Precision

Information from several sources is used to determine a desired respondent sample size. They include:
1. the number of sample units in the target population;
2. the desired level of precision;
3. key analysis variables such as totals and proportions; and
4. important reporting domains (i.e., subpopulations).

The number of units in the target population is currently being estimated with counts from the 2008–09 Common Core of Data and 2007–08 PSS as a surrogate to the actual frame. The first-stage sampling frame for schools for the 2011–12 SASS will be finalized in spring 2011.

The desired level of precision for SASS estimates is defined in terms of the estimated coefficient of variation (CV; also referred to as a relative standard error). As set in the 1990–91 SASS, key survey estimates used to calculate the overall sample size and allocation to strata should have a CV no greater than 15 percentage points.

The evaluation below includes a set of important analysis variables identified in the summer of 2010 as well as generic proportions to address other important SASS characteristics. These variables and generic values are evaluated:
- by school type (public charter, traditional public, overall public, private);
- by region within school type;
- by grade level (elementary, secondary, and combined for private schools; elementary, middle, secondary, and combined for public schools);
- by grade level and region within school type; and
- by teachers' years of experience.

School-level Precision

Table E-1 contains the marginal totals for the expected number of *responding* schools in the 2011–12 SASS and the minimum number of respondents needed for a set of key estimates to have no larger than a 15 percent CV. The *key school-level estimates* identified by NCES and ESSI used in the evaluation included[1]:
- total number of schools;
- total number of students in schools;
- total number of libraries;
- total number of teachers; and

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[1] Additional analysis variables were evaluated but later excluded from the list because the results were cost prohibitive (e.g., percentage of principals within minority race/ethnicity categories).

- total number of school staff: principals; library media specialists/librarians; school support staff; full-and part-time school/guidance counselors; nurses (full-and part-time combined); and psychologists (full- and part-time combined).

Table E-1.   Expected number of responding schools for the 2011–12 SASS compared with minimum respondent sample sizes to achieve a 15 percent CV by school type, region, and grade level

Region and grade level	Expected number of responding schools in the 2011–12 SASS				Minimum respondent numbers to achieve a 15 percent CV[1]		
	Private	All public[2]	Traditional public	Public charter	Private	All public[2]	Public charter
Northeast	472	1,138	1,093	45	129	464	63
Elementary	245	474	461	13	17	59	
Middle	†	156	145	11	†	170	
Secondary	99	424	414	10	28	65	
Combined	128	84	73	11	83	170	
Midwest	518	1,710	1,644	66	113	492	62
Elementary	346	658	633	25	31	46	
Middle	†	201	189	12	†	119	
Secondary	76	619	605	14	24	108	
Combined	96	232	217	15	58	219	
South	653	2,623	2,531	92	129	596	58
Elementary	297	995	963	32	34	56	
Middle	†	374	357	17	†	204	
Secondary	59	956	936	20	32	150	
Combined	297	298	275	23	63	186	
West	378	2,212	2,090	122	114	1,032	61
Elementary	211	905	864	41	18	61	
Middle	†	304	287	17	†	184	
Secondary	47	766	731	35	33	324	
Combined	120	237	208	29	62	463	
All	2,021	7,683	7,358	325	484	2,585	245
Elementary	1,099	3,032	2,921	111	100	221	
Middle	†	1,035	978	57	†	678	
Secondary	281	2,765	2,686	79	118	647	
Combined	641	851	773	78	266	1,038	

† Not applicable.
[1] Calculations used overall design effects of the weights 1.37 (private schools), 2.31 (all public schools), and 1.46 (public charter schools) to approximate the variation in the design weights inherent in a probability-proportional-to-size (PPS) sampling of schools for SASS.
[2] Comparisons in previous rounds of the study have included private versus public; hence the category "Total" combines traditional public schools with public charter schools.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School and Private School Documentation Data File," 2007–08.

Three domains in table E-1 appear to be underpowered (i.e., minimum respondent number is less than the currently expected number of responding schools):

- public charter schools in the Northeast;
- traditional public middle schools in the Northeast; and
- traditional public combined schools at the national level.

Two options for ensuring that the criterion is met are either (1) to move sample from domains with excess sample to the underpowered domains as implemented in 2007–08 SASS, or (2) to randomly sample

additional schools within these domains to ensure the minimum number defined above is met and not reduce the power for other domains from levels experienced in 2007–08.

Estimated percentages of certain population characteristics are another important feature of SASS. For example, the percentage of traditional public schools is estimated to be 92.6, the percentage of female principals in traditional public schools is estimated to be approximately 50.5, and the percentage of teachers self-identified as a race/ethnicity other than White is 16.4. To accommodate varying levels of estimated percentages in SASS, sample sizes for estimates ranging from 2.5 (rare occurrence) to 95 percentage points were evaluated against the 15 percent CV criterion (table E-2).

As shown in table E-2, SASS estimated percentages for both elementary and secondary public schools (traditional public and public charter combined) will have no larger than a 15 percent CV provided that the characteristic being estimated is associated with at least 25 percent of the target population. This suggests that estimates such as the percentage of teachers self-identified as non-White (16.4 percent) will have a CV *greater* than 15 percent. Note that smaller percentages require larger sample sizes for a specified level of precision in comparison with larger proportions.

Table E-2.   Estimated school-level percentages supported for the SASS 2011–12 sample allocation under the 15 percent CV criterion by school type and grade level

School type	Grade levels	Percentages
Public schools (all)	Elementary/secondary	25 to 99
	Middle/combined	35 to 99
	All	5 to 99
Public charter schools	All	40 to 99
Private schools	All	10 to 99
	Elementary	25 to 99
	Secondary	45 to 99
	Combined	30 to 99

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School and Private School Documentation Data File," 2007–08.

Teacher-level Precision

Table E-3 presents the estimated number of teachers who will respond to the 2011–12 SASS based on data from the 2007–08 SASS. Data are presented for teachers within each of the 4 years of experience categories by school type.

Table E-3.   Estimated number of responding teachers by years of teaching experience and school type[1]

School type	Total	Years of experience			
		1 year	2–3 years	4–19 years	20+ years
Total	45,000	2,295	4,722	23,369	14,614
Traditional public	38,612	1,825	3,939	20,321	12,527
Public charter	836	89	144	479	124
Private	5,552	381	639	2,569	1,963

[1] Calculations used overall design effects of the weights 3.87 (private schools), 6.49 (traditional public schools), and 4.09 (public charter schools) to approximate the variation in the design weights inherent in a probability-proportional-to-size (PPS) sampling of schools for the SASS and differential sampling within schools.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher and Private School Teacher Documentation Data File," 2007–08.

Many items collected in the SASS teacher questionnaire can be expressed in terms of proportions within the population. For example, the following characteristics were noted by NCES and ESSI as *key teacher survey estimates*:

- percentage of teachers by years of experience category;
- percentage of teachers by full-/part-time teaching status;
- percent distribution of teachers by certain main assignment categories;[2] and
- percentage of teachers by teaching level.

As with the school-level analysis, percentages of populations by important variables ranging from 2.5 (rare occurrence) to 95 percent were evaluated using the sample allocation of teachers by level of teaching experience within school type. Table E-4 summarizes the results. This indicates that many key estimated percentages will be supported by the 2011–12 SASS. The exception is associated with rare characteristics in the population such as, for example, the percentage of teachers by non-White race/ethnicity categories by school type and grade level.

Table E-4.   Estimated teacher-level percentages supported for the 2011–12 SASS sample allocation under the 15 percent CV criterion by years of experience and school type

School type	Years of experience	Percentage
Traditional public schools	1 year	12.5 to 99
	2–3 years	10.0 to 99
	4+ years	2.5 to 99
Public charter schools	1 year	55 to 99
	2–3 years	40 to 99
	4–19 years	18 to 99
	20+ years	50 to 99
Private schools	1 year	12.5 to 99
	2–3 years	12.5 to 99
	4+ years	10 to 99

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher and Private School Teacher Documentation Data File," 2007–08.

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[2] Main assignment categories such as Latin do not include a sufficient number of teachers to satisfy the 15 percent CV criterion.

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Appendix F. Summary of the 2009 Field Test Findings and Recommendations for the 2011–12 SASS Methodology

This appendix contains a report prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau. Its contents are listed below.

Overview of the Field Test

In preparation for the 2011–12 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), the U.S. Census Bureau conducted a field test of a new collection methodology for the Teacher Listing Form (TLF) component of the SASS. The TLF collects the name and selected information for every eligible teacher in SASS sampled schools. In the past, each sampled school received a paper listing form. The 2009 field test examined the feasibility of collecting the teacher data electronically from districts with sampled schools rather than on paper from each individual school.

This new methodology had the potential to improve the efficiency of the SASS collection. The expected benefits included the following:

- reducing data collection costs significantly by eliminating the need for field follow-up operations in the fall for the TLF;
- reducing respondent burden by collecting school-level information from the district, therefore reducing the number of respondents and the difficulty of providing the information;
- reducing data processing costs by eliminating the majority of data keying for the TLF; and
- improving the timeliness of teacher sampling and the administration of the teacher component of the survey.

The field test had two primary research questions:

1. Was the new methodology feasible? That is, were districts able and willing to provide teachers' names and data for selected schools?
2. Were the resulting teacher lists satisfactory? That is, were the districts able to provide data that were comparable in accuracy and reliability to the lists provided by schools? In addition, this includes the question about whether districts report in accordance with the SASS definition for a 'teacher,' including teachers that met the definition and excluding staff that did not meet the definition.

If the districts were able to provide data and the teacher coverage was sufficient, then the test had secondary research questions regarding operational feasibility and the data quality. These questions included the following:

- Teacher data—Could the district provide the following information for each teacher: name, subject matter taught, part-time or full-time status, and years of experience?
- School data—Could districts provide the grade range of each school and/or the enrollment? (This information is used to identify school mergers and splits from the universe.)
- Timing—When could districts provide the information for their full roster of teachers for the current school year? Is this sooner or later than when the schools have this information?
- Operations—If collecting teacher lists from school districts was determined to be feasible, what operations (mailout, telephone calls) will be needed?
- Technical details—In what format could respondents provide a file (Microsoft Excel, other) and how should the website and secure server be set up to receive teacher files?

These secondary questions were used to inform the study about the limitations regarding the availability or quality of the additional sampling information collected on the TLF. If the coverage was sufficient, these analyses would be the basis for the decision whether or not to implement this methodology in production of the SASS.

Field Test Design Features

The field test included multiple panels designed to address the issues of feasibility (could and would districts provide data), data quality (accuracy of data from districts versus schools), and file format (how would districts send the data). A sample of 100 districts was selected and asked to provide information electronically, but they were divided into two distinct panels:

- Panel 1—Districts were asked to provide an electronic list of teachers in any format convenient for them. The Census Bureau provided an Excel template, but did not encourage its use.
- Panel 2—Districts were asked to provide an electronic list of teachers using the Excel template provided; however, any format was accepted.

In order to check the quality and accuracy of the lists provided by the districts, schools were sampled in each of the 100 sampled districts. Schools were divided into three treatment groups. Within each group, they were divided again by whether the school's district was asked to provide an electronic list in any convenient format or using the Excel template. The three groups are listed below:

- Group A—Schools were asked to provide an electronic teacher list. Within this group, half the schools were asked to provide an electronic list of teachers in any format convenient for them. The other half of the schools were asked to provide an electronic list of teachers using the Excel template provided.
- Group B—Schools were asked to verify and correct, as necessary, a traditional TLF that was preprinted with the information the district had provided. Schools received the same treatment regardless of their district's panel (whether the district was asked to provide list in Excel format or any format convenient for them).
- Group C—Schools were asked to provide information on the traditional paper TLF. Schools received the same treatment regardless of their district's panel (whether the district was asked to provide the list in Excel format or any format convenient for them).

The sample size of each school group is shown below in table F-1.

Table F-1.   Sample sizes of each school group: 2009 SASS field test

	District panel	
School group	Electronic list in any format (50 districts)	Electronic list in Excel template (50 districts)
Total number of schools	242	255
Provide an electronic teacher list	59	67
Verify district list preprinted on paper TLF	130	130
Provide paper TLF	53	58

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) Field Test, 2009.

Field Test Time Schedule

The field test began with a telephone operation to sampled districts to determine the appropriate contact person for the list of teachers. The Census Bureau sent the appropriate contact person a letter describing the SASS and asking the respondent to provide an electronic list of teachers using the secure website. At the same time, the Census Bureau sent schools in group A a letter requesting an electronic list of teachers and schools in group C a letter requesting that they complete the enclosed TLF. A reminder letter was

sent to nonresponding districts and schools. The Census Bureau conducted a telephone follow-up operation to remind nonresponding districts and schools to provide the electronic list of teachers or complete the TLF, as appropriate. Once electronic lists of teachers were received from the districts for schools in group B, the Census Bureau printed a TLF prepopulated with the teacher information. These forms were sent to their respective schools with a letter requesting that the respondent review the TLF and correct the information, if necessary. Nonresponding schools were contacted by telephone. Table F-2 provides the timeframe for these activities.

Table F-2.   Data collection time schedule for the SASS field test: 2009

Activity	Month of activity
District contact call operation to determine appropriate district contact person	Oct. 2009
Initial letter mailout to districts	Nov. 2009
Initial letter mailout to schools	Nov. 2009
Reminder letter mailout to districts	Dec. 2009
Reminder letter mailout to schools	Dec. 2009
Telephone follow-up operation to remind districts and schools to provide their electronic list or paper TLF	Jan. 2010
Verification mailout to schools of prepopulated TLFs with information provided by districts	Dec. 2009–Mar. 2010
Telephone follow-up to verification schools	Dec. 2009–Mar. 2010

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) Field Test, 2009.

Summary of Findings

The results of the field test were examined in a number of ways to evaluate whether the proposed data collection methodology should be considered for the 2011–12 SASS. The two most important questions were the primary research questions outlined above—were the districts able and willing to provide TLF data, and were the data of comparable (or sufficient) quality. The first question was answered primarily by reviewing district participation and response rates. The second question was answered by comparing verified data from districts and their schools to examine whether districts provided data that met the quality standards necessary on the TLF for the purposes of teacher coverage and teacher sampling. The results of the field test provided evidence that implementing the proposed methodology would provide comparable data in a timelier manner at a significantly lower cost in the 2011–12 administration of SASS than following the 2007–08 SASS methodology (i.e., asking schools to complete and return a paper TLF by mail, with follow-up by telephone calls and personal visits).

Participation and Response Rates

Analysis of the response rates and a review of the debriefing questions asked of the districts provided evidence that the districts were both willing and able to provide TLF information in an electronic format. Table F-3 presents the response rates for all districts, as well as the response rates for each panel. Seventy-two of the 100 districts contacted delivered an electronic file, for a response rate of 72 percent. It is worth noting that nearly 60 percent of the districts responded in the first 6 weeks after mailout, before telephone follow-up started. Fifty-seven percent of the schools included in the independent panels of the study provided files or TLFs during the entire data collection period. The response rate for districts was higher than the response rate for schools (72 percent and 57 percent, respectively). This result clearly suggested a "yes" for research question one: were school districts willing and able to provide teacher lists for sampled schools.

Table F-3. Final response rate (in percent) by district panel: 2009 SASS field test

District panel	Response rate
All districts (100 districts)	72
Electronic list in any format (50 districts)	64
Electronic list in Excel template (50 districts)	80

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) Field Test, 2009 (previously unpublished tabulation).

Comparing the response rate for districts in the field test with the TLF response rate during the 2007–08 SASS administration provided further support for the new methodology. During the 2007–08 SASS, approximately 56 percent of schools provided TLFs after mail and telephone operations, and the remaining 44 percent were sent to field follow-up. In the field test, 72 percent of districts provided an electronic list of teachers. If the same percentage of districts provided an electronic list of teachers for their sampled schools during the 2011–12 SASS, the response rate prior to field follow-up would be significantly higher than during the 2007–08 SASS.

Table F-3 shows that the districts which were asked specifically to provide the lists in Excel format responded at a higher rate (80 percent) than the districts which were asked to provide the list in any electronic format (64 percent). These results are encouraging, as Excel files are the preferred format for this operation and explicitly asking for a very common and familiar format resulted in greater participation than a more flexible, but perhaps more ambiguous, request. Additional comments from the districts in follow-up questions and debriefing interviews are presented later in this report, but the initial findings based upon participation show this methodology to be feasible.

Table F-4 provides the number of teacher lists received from districts and schools. The 72 participating districts provided lists for 336 schools, representing 67.61 percent of the sampled schools. Of these schools, 83 provided an independent teacher list and 125 reviewed a TLF prepopulated with the information the district provided. Sixty of the 83 independent list pairs were compared for accuracy. The results of the analysis are reported in the following section. The 28 districts that did not participate were responsible for 161 sampled schools; however, 51 of these schools provided an independent teacher list.

Table F-4.   Number of teacher lists received by source: 2009 SASS field test

	Number of schools
Total in initial sample	497
District provided teacher list	336
School provided an independent teacher list	83[1]
School did <u>not</u> provide independent teacher list	51
School reviewed prepopulated teacher list	125
School did <u>not</u> review prepopulated teacher list	77
District did not provide teacher list	161
School provided an independent teacher list	52
School did <u>not</u> provide independent teacher list	109

[1]While 83 list pairs were received, a subset of 60 was compared for accuracy due to limited resources.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) Field Test, 2009 (previously unpublished tabulation).

Data Quality

The primary purpose of the TLF is to obtain a list of all SASS-eligible teachers for each sampled school. Historically in SASS, the schools have provided this list and significant efforts have been made to reduce the burden on the schools, ensure appropriate teacher frame coverage, improve the efficiency of the sampling, and maintain high response rates. The two important aspects of quality are teacher coverage and substantive accuracy of the ancillary information. Teacher coverage refers to the extent to which the information collected includes all SASS-eligible teachers and only SASS-eligible teachers. Coverage errors occur when eligible teachers are left off the TLF and when noneligible teachers are included. Substantive accuracy refers to the correctness of the information schools reported about each teacher. The first data quality section reviews teacher coverage and the second section will address substantive accuracy. Teacher coverage and substantive accuracy were evaluated by comparing the list pair, that is, the teacher list for each school provided by the district and the corresponding school.

Teacher Coverage

The first and most important research question regarding the quality of the data considers coverage—were the appropriate teachers included and inappropriate staff excluded so that the district-provided TLFs provided an appropriate frame for teacher sampling? Teacher coverage was evaluated using a gross error rate for the TLF information. Errors were defined as discrepancies between the list pair. The Census Bureau reconciled all discrepancies by calling the schools to determine which list was correct.

Teacher discrepancies mainly consisted of either the school or district not having an updated roster of current teachers (including name changes from marriage, or one school listing them by a nickname that is not easily matched to their real name), teachers being included who do not meet the SASS definition of a teacher, or the district not including a teacher for the sample school because they work at more than one school. Most of these mistakes resulted from the school or district not responding consistently with the directions provided.

Gross error rates were calculated for schools and districts for each panel, where the gross error rate is defined as the total number of errors divided by the total number of correctly reported teachers within each panel. All errors were counted—incorrectly listed teachers as well as teachers incorrectly omitted. Table F-5 presents the school and district gross error rates. Overall, teacher coverage of the district-collected data was comparable to the data collected from the schools. When comparing the gross error rate of all list pairs (regardless of format), the gross error rate for the schools was 5.11 percent compared to 5.74 percent for the districts. These overall rates suggest that the districts are able to provide TLF data of a comparable quality.

Table F-5.   School and district teacher gross error rates (in percent) by reporting format: 2009 SASS field test

	Gross error rate[1]	
District and school reporting formats	School	District
District provided an electronic list in any format		
School provided electronic list in any format (10 schools)	4.34	9.18
School completed paper TLF (21 schools)	6.13	10.76
All school lists (31 schools)	5.54	10.24
District provided an electronic list in Excel template		
School provided an electronic list in Excel (8 schools)	2.42	1.90
School completed paper TLF (21 schools)	6.05	2.89
All school lists (29 schools)	4.81	2.55
All district lists, regardless of format		
School provided an electronic list (18 schools)	3.20	4.85
School completed paper TLF (42 schools)	6.09	6.19
All school lists (60 schools)	5.11	5.74

[1]Gross error rate = Total number of listing errors/total teachers reported.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) Field Test, 2009 (previously unpublished tabulation).

The gross error rate for districts that were asked to provide an electronic list in any format was higher than the gross error rate for the paired schools, with a district gross error rate of 10.24 percent and a school gross error rate of 5.54 percent. However, the gross error rate for districts that were specifically asked to provide an electronic list using the Excel template was 2.55 percent, while the gross error rate of all the paired schools was 4.81 percent. An examination of the gross error rates of district respondents by the requested format (any format and Excel) reinforced the overall finding that teacher coverage was of a comparable quality for lists provided by schools and districts. The lower gross error rate for the districts asked to use the Excel template (2.55 percent) suggests that the use of the Excel template may result in better quality data. The template included columns for each of the appropriate variables with the goal of helping the respondents identify and provide the correct information.

When the district was asked to provide the electronic list of teachers in any format, both the paired schools that provided the information in an electronic file and the paired schools that provided the information on the traditional paper TLF had lower gross error rates than their districts. In both instances, the school information appeared to be more accurate than the district, with gross error rates of 4–6 percent, about half of the gross error rate of the paired districts. These results were less encouraging.

However, when the district was specifically asked to provide their electronic list of teachers in the Excel template, the districts provided teacher lists that were of comparable quality. The gross error rate for districts using the Excel template was 1.90 percent compared to 2.42 percent for the paired schools that provided an electronic list. The gross error rate for districts using the Excel template was 2.89 percent compared to 6.05 percent for the paired schools that completed the traditional paper form.

Schools that responded using the Excel template had lower gross error rates than schools responding using the traditional TLF. At the same time, the schools responding using the Excel template had higher gross error rates than districts responding using the Excel template. While the differences were small, these results provide evidence that teacher coverage would be comparable, and potentially better, when using teacher lists provided by the districts in an Excel template. Overall, these results provide evidence

that districts can and will provide a list of teachers that is of a comparable quality to lists provided by schools in terms of teacher coverage.

Substantive Accuracy

Substantive accuracy refers to the accuracy of the items the districts reported about each teacher. The districts provided lists of teacher names, along with the teacher's subject matter, full-time or part-time status, teaching experience, and likelihood of continuing teaching. This information is used for teacher sampling; therefore, the accuracy of the information is important. The results in this section compare the responses of the corresponding districts and schools across the panels.

The information reported for each teacher independently by the district and the paired school was compared for each of the substantive items. A total of 60 district lists were compared to the electronic list or the TLF provided by the school. Any discrepancies were verified by calling both the school and district, and the results of these contacts were documented. The results for each list pair were compared for each of the substantive questions. For each school, analysts classified the accuracy in the following categories:

- school list more accurate than the district list (labeled "School list more accurate");
- school list less accurate than the district list (labeled "District list more accurate"); and
- school list neither more nor less accurate than the district list (labeled "Lists equally accurate").

Table F-6 presents the frequencies based on the above accuracy classification overall and for each of the substantive items. Overall, 19 (32 percent) of the school lists and 14 (23 percent) of the district lists were determined to be more accurate than their paired list. The remaining 27 (45 percent) of the corresponding school and district lists were determined to be equally accurate. Comparing the accuracy of the detailed teacher information from the schools and districts, the modal category for all but one item is, "Lists equally accurate." When one list was more accurate than the other, the school list was more likely to be accurate; however, in most instances, the difference between the number of school lists and district lists that were more accurate than their paired list was relatively small.

Table F-6.   Frequency distribution of list accuracy by type of substantive information: 2009 SASS field test

	School list more accurate	District list more accurate	Lists equally accurate	Cases not able to compare
Overall results	19	14	27	0
Teachers	22	10	28	0
Subject matter	12	12	33	3
Full-time/part-time status	10	7	39	4
Teaching experience	20	17	15	8
Status next year	6	1	32	21

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) Field Test, 2009 (previously unpublished tabulation).

Table F-7 presents the frequencies based on the accuracy classification overall and for each of the substantive items for list pairs in which the school provided an electronic list. Table F-8 presents the frequencies based on the accuracy classification overall and for each of the substantive items for list pairs in which the school completed a paper form. As shown in table F-7, the electronic school list was generally more accurate than the paired district list, though, in many cases, the lists were equally accurate. As shown in table F-8, when the school completed a paper TLF, the lists were generally equally accurate overall and for each substantive item. When one list was more accurate than the other, it was the district list for all but one substantive item. Examining the two school groups by whether the school provided an

electronic file or completed the paper form did not change the conclusion that the districts and schools reported at similar levels of accuracy.

Table F-7.   Frequency distribution of list accuracy by type of substantive information for schools that provided electronic lists: 2009 SASS field test

	School list more accurate	District list more accurate	Lists equally accurate	Cases not able to compare
Overall results	9	3	6	0
Teachers	10	3	5	0
Subject matter	9	4	5	0
Full-time/part-time status	5	1	8	4
Teaching experience	6	2	4	6
Status next year	2	0	9	7

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) Field Test, 2009 (previously unpublished tabulation).

Table F-8.   Frequency distribution of list accuracy by type of substantive information for schools that completed paper TLFs: 2009 SASS field test

	School list more accurate	District list more accurate	Lists equally accurate	Cases not able to compare
Overall results	10	11	21	0
Teachers	12	7	23	0
Subject matter	3	8	28	3
Full-time/part-time status	5	6	31	0
Teaching experience	14	15	11	2
Status next year	4	1	23	14

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) Field Test, 2009 (previously unpublished tabulation).

Subject Matter Discrepancies

Table F-6 showed that 33 of 57 list pairs (58 percent) reported the same subject matter for the listed teachers. When differences occurred, the school and district were each more accurate in 12 cases. There were a variety of reasons for discrepancies in the subject matter. Many discrepancies occurred because a teacher taught multiple subjects, and the school or district listed only one of the subjects. Many of the errors were the results of the school marking an incorrect subject. A few cases had, for instance, fifth- or sixth-grade teachers listed as general elementary teachers, but these teachers taught specific subjects. The discrepancies arose when the school or district would list the specific subject taught and the other would list general elementary. In a couple of instances, a teacher used to teach one subject (what district reported), but now teaches a new subject; in these cases, the district didn't have updated records. Finally, another common mistake was that both schools and districts would classify subjects such as physical education, music, and art as "general elementary" rather than "other."

Tables F-7 and F-8 show that examining the different school groups by whether the school provided an electronic list or completed a paper form did not change the conclusion that the districts and schools reported teachers' subject matter at similar levels of accuracy.

Full-time/Part-time Status Discrepancies

Overall, 39 of 56 list pairs (70 percent) reported part- or full-time status with the same level of accuracy. As presented in table F-6, when differences occurred, the school was more accurate in 10 cases and the district was more accurate in seven cases. The reported errors occurred when schools marked part-time, indicating teachers were part-time at the school but full-time in the district. The converse also occurred; some schools listed teachers as full-time and the district had marked the teacher part-time because the teacher worked part-time in multiple schools. Each respondent made errors in a manner that may have been the result of not fully reading or understanding the directions, but the errors were not significantly more likely by either respondent, nor did they appear to present a systematic bias.

Tables F-7 and F-8 show that examining the different school groups by whether the school provided an electronic list or completed a paper form did not change the conclusion that the districts and schools reported teachers' full- or part-time status at similar levels of accuracy.

Teaching Experience Discrepancies

Overall, 15 of 52 list pairs (29 percent) reported teachers' experience with the same level of accuracy. As presented in table F-6, when differences occurred, the school was more accurate in 20 cases and the district was more accurate in 17 cases. Teaching experience discrepancies reported by the schools were often a result of the schools reporting their best estimate, which was not as accurate as the district report. Many of the schools reported that the district probably had better information on teacher experience. One school reported that they called their teachers and asked for their total experience, resulting in numbers that did not match the district-reported numbers. A few of the districts making errors reported the experience of teachers only for the sample school, rather than all the schools in which the teacher had taught.

Tables F-7 and F-8 show that examining the two school groups by whether the school provided an electronic list or completed a paper form did not change the conclusion that the districts and schools reported teachers' experience at similar levels of accuracy.

Discrepancies in Whether Teacher is Expected to be Teaching Next Year

Overall, 32 of 39 list pairs (82 percent) reported teachers' expected status next year with the same level of accuracy. As presented in table F-6, when differences occurred, the school was more accurate in six cases and the district was more accurate in one case. Most districts and schools provided this information, but this had the lowest response among the requested items. When asked why it was omitted, most respondents said the information was accessible, but they omitted it because it was time consuming to access. Most of the discrepancies between the school and district occurred as a result of the district not having an updated list of teachers planning to quit or retire the following year.

Tables F-7 and F-8 show that examining the two school groups by whether the school provided an electronic list or completed a paper form did not change the conclusion that the districts and schools reported teachers' status for the following year at similar levels of accuracy.

Dependent Verification

An additional aspect of the field test was a dependent verification. In the dependent verification group, schools were sent traditional paper TLFs prepopulated with the teacher information that the districts provided electronically. The dependent verification was included in case a second step was needed to improve the accuracy of the district-reported data. In fact, the district-reported data in the independent test was of comparable quality to the school-reported data, so a dependent process will not be needed if this methodology is implemented in the next SASS. The dependent results, however, reinforce the independent results with respect to the quality of data. In 40 percent of these dependent verifications,

districts were found to be equally as accurate as the schools. In just over half of the cases, the schools were found to be more accurate than the districts, but the overall gross error rate for the districts was still only 5.2 percent. It should be noted that this dependent verification would not catch school errors since the schools are confirming rather than independently reporting teacher lists.

Summary of Teacher Coverage and Substantive Accuracy

The preceding findings have answered the second primary research question. Districts were able to provide a list of teachers that was comparable in accuracy to the lists provided by schools. Moving beyond teacher coverage, it is clear that districts have access to and the willingness to provide the teacher-level substantive sampling information. The results suggest that, given the appropriate assistance with an Excel template, districts provide either equally accurate or more accurate information across most measures. It is also important to note that districts responded at a higher rate than schools in this study. All of these findings weigh in favor of the new methodology when considering the potential value of any changes to the SASS collection methodology.

Information Availability and Timing

The website that respondents used to provide their list of teachers included several follow-up questions. The first follow-up question asked around what date the school or district would be able to provide a complete listing of teachers working in the school(s). Seventy-four districts and 21 schools responded to this question; however, not all responding entities provided a list of teachers. Responses to the follow-up questions indicated that there is a wide range of dates that schools and districts are able to provide the information for their full roster of teachers. Overall, it does appear that many of the districts may be able to provide this information earlier than the schools. Table F-9 provides the number of districts and schools that reported being able to provide a list of teachers during each month. A substantially higher percentage of districts than schools could report teacher rosters before July (32 percent and 14 percent, respectively). However, it should be noted that all schools reported being able to provide the information by November, while a few districts would not have full roster information available until December.

Table F-9. Earliest month that districts and schools can provide teacher list: 2009 SASS field test

	District			School		
Month	Number	Percent	Cumulative percent	Number	Percent	Cumulative percent
January	3	4.05	4.05	0	0.00	0.00
February	1	1.35	5.41	1	4.76	4.76
March	0	0.00	5.41	0	0.00	4.76
April	0	0.00	5.41	0	0.00	4.76
May	2	2.70	8.11	1	4.76	9.52
June	18	24.32	32.43	1	4.76	14.29
July	9	12.16	44.59	0	0.00	14.29
August	8	10.81	55.41	6	28.57	42.86
September	8	10.81	66.22	6	28.57	71.43
October	15	20.27	86.49	4	19.05	90.48
November	6	8.11	94.59	2	9.52	100.0
December	4	5.41	100.0	0	0.00	100.0

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) Field Test, 2009 (previously unpublished tabulation).

The next follow-up questions asked whether the school or district would be able to provide the grade levels offered by each school and the schools' total enrollment number. Ninety-six districts and schools

answered these questions. All respondents said that they would be able to provide the grade range of each school in sample. Four of the 75 districts and two of the 21 schools that responded said they would not be able to provide total enrollment; all others said they would be able to do so.

The final question asked what office or area of the school district prepared the listing of teachers. Overwhelmingly, the district files came from the Human Resources Department. Other sources included the Superintendent's office, the Finance Department, and the Information Technology Department. Some districts even obtained the list from the school.

Debriefing Questions

After the data collection ended, the Census Bureau called some school districts to ask them follow-up questions. Districts were called for one of three reasons: the district provided a file, but not in Excel; the district provided a file, but did not include all of the requested information; or the district did not provide a file.

Districts That Provided a File, but Not in Excel

Almost all schools and districts in the sample provided their files in Excel. For districts that provided a file, but not in Excel, the Census Bureau staff contacted the respondent by phone to ask if the district was able to export their teacher data into Excel. If yes, staff asked if it was a difficult or time-consuming process, and if no, staff asked in what other formats the district could provide the file. Finally, staff asked if it would have been easier to produce a hard copy listing of the requested information. Only two districts provided a file that was not in Excel. One of the districts said it was not possible this year to export the data into Excel, but next year they would be able to provide an Excel file. This district also said that in the future, they would rather provide a paper copy of the TLF, but that it is not too hard for them to provide electronically. The other district said they are only able to do it in PDF format, but that it was extremely easy and they would be happy to supply the information again electronically in the future.

Districts That Provided a File, but Did Not Include All the Requested Information

For districts that provided a file, but not all the requested information, the Census Bureau staff contacted the respondent by phone to ask why the respondent was unable to provide the items missing and determine the best source for this information. One district that did not include full-time/part-time status, experience, and expected teaching status for next year said that they thought they had included the information, but mistakenly forgot it. The respondent said the information was easily accessible and that they could provide it in the future. Finally, she said it would definitely be better to contact the district for information in the future and that their schools forward anything like this to them anyway. Another district forgot to identify at which school each teacher listed was teaching. The respondent said in future surveys they would make sure it is clarified and that because it is a small district, it would not matter either way if the information was collected from the school or district. The last district did not list subject taught, full-time/part-time status, or expected teaching status for next year. The district pulled all the information from a report that is available within the district. There is no running list of updated information, so the information provided is all that is available. The district suggested obtaining the information from the state.

Districts That Did Not Provide a File

For districts that did not provide a file, the Census Bureau contacted the district staff by phone to ask if the district would have the ability to electronically provide: 1) a full roster of teachers; 2) grade levels; and 3) total enrollment numbers for schools in their districts. Of the 12 districts called, only one stated that they would not be able to provide teacher names. The remaining stated that in the future they would be able to provide the information requested. All but one district stated that they could provide the

information before or during the school year. The remaining district stated that the information would not be available until after the school year began.

Caveats

There are a few caveats that should be noted when reviewing the results of the field test. The sample sizes for this study were limited, so the level of confidence in these results is somewhat limited. To illustrate, assuming simple random sampling, a sample size of 60 would require about a 4.5 percent difference in gross error rates to say there is a difference. A sample size of 175 would require a 2.7 percent difference.

In addition, the panels were not assigned randomly. This could have introduced a state effect. However, since all panels were selected from multiple states, the potential impact of this is likely to be small. The time of year could also have had an impact. In SASS, list collection begins in August and is mostly completed by November. The data collection for the field test began on November 23, 2009, and was completed on March 26, 2010.

Another potential drawback is that districts may refuse to provide the list and may refuse to allow their schools to participate in the SASS when contacted. In the field test, two large districts refused for their schools. This eliminated 25 schools from the test and could have a significant impact in the SASS if districts are contacted rather than schools.

Recommendation

Based on the results of the field test, the Census Bureau recommended implementing the methodology for the 2011–12 SASS. The data collection operations conducted for the field test worked well and resulted in a response rate of 72 percent for all districts. The Census Bureau recommended that similar operations be implemented for the 2011–12 SASS. District offices should be contacted by telephone prior to the beginning of SASS data collection to determine the appropriate contact person for the list of teachers. As the districts that were asked to provide the teacher list using the Excel template had a higher response rate and provided more accurate teacher data, the initial letter should request that the district provide a list of teachers using the Excel template. Follow-up efforts should include a reminder letter and telephone follow-up.

If districts are unable to complete the electronic version or prefer a paper copy, then a paper TLF should be available as well. If districts refuse to provide the information or do not respond to the request, then the Census Bureau should contact the schools and ask them to provide this information either electronically or by completing a paper TLF.

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Appendix G. Cognitive Testing of Schools and Staffing Survey Items Summary of Findings and Recommendations, September 2010

This appendix contains a report prepared by ICF Macro. Its contents are listed below.

Introduction

In the spring and summer of 2010, the Census Bureau contracted with ICF Macro, a research and evaluation company headquartered in Calverton, Maryland, to plan and carry out a series of cognitive interviews with teachers, principals, and school district personnel. The purpose of these interviews was to gather feedback on proposed questions for the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), a national educational survey that is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Census Bureau. This report is a summary of the feedback that ICF Macro collected from participants, as well as recommendations for revisions to the items.

The SASS consists of several different instruments, including a questionnaire for teachers, a questionnaire for principals, a questionnaire that asks for information about a school's programs and resources, and a questionnaire that is completed by personnel at the school district level. In this case, the Census Bureau asked that ICF Macro test proposed questions for all four of these instruments.

Participants were recruited from several sources, including a list provided by NCES of schools and educators in the SASS sampling frame, a list purchased from an outside vendor, and an ICF Macro database of educators. An e-mail was sent out to potential participants that described the study and offered an incentive to those who participated. Interested participants who contacted ICF Macro by telephone or e-mail were then screened and scheduled for an interview.

Interviews for all of the questionnaires averaged 45 to 60 minutes and were conducted by phone. Prior to each interview, the participant was e-mailed a copy of the proposed items and told to print them out. Participants in the teacher, principal, and school questionnaire testing were asked not to read the items before the interview. Participants in the district testing were asked to review the items before the interview to ensure that they had the information they would need to respond.

During the interview, participants were asked to answer each of the proposed items as they normally would if they were answering a paper survey. As they answered each item, they were asked to "think aloud"—that is, to describe out loud what they were thinking as they read and answered the question and point out anything that surprised or confused them. After the participant had answered a set of items, the interviewer would then ask a series of follow-up questions or probes and get clarification of responses as necessary. If a skip pattern caused a participant not to respond to an item, he or she was later asked to review the item and provide feedback.

The following sections address each of the four questionnaires—district, school, principal, and teacher—separately. Each section provides a brief summary of the participants that were recruited, and then provides findings and recommendations for each of the tested items.

Testing of Items for the District Questionnaire

Description of Participants

Twelve district representatives were interviewed to obtain their feedback on the proposed items to the district questionnaire. Three of the representatives were from small districts (of 1,000 or fewer students), seven were from medium districts (of 1,001–3,500 students), and two represented large districts (of 3,500 or more students). Participants were from the following states:
- California;
- Georgia;
- Massachusetts;

- Michigan;
- Nebraska;
- New Jersey;
- Ohio;
- Pennsylvania;
- Tennessee;
- Virginia; and
- Washington

Summary of Findings

The following section summarizes the results of the interviews testing items for the District SASS Questionnaire. Under each item tested, we describe key findings as well as recommendations.

ITEM 1

Around the first of October, how many SHORT-TERM substitute teachers of any grades K–12 were eligible to teach in this district?

Record HEAD COUNTS, not FTEs (full-time equivalent).

Do NOT include teachers who teach ONLY prekindergarten, postsecondary, or adult education.

__ __ __　Short-term substitute teachers

Findings

- Approximately half of participants were able to answer this item accurately and provide an exact head count.

  - Two participants estimated the answer because the district does not keep a list for prior years. (This problem was largely due to the timing of the interviews, and would be less of a problem in November, when the survey is administered.)

  - One participant was unable to answer this item because a third party provides substitutes for the district and the district does not have access to the total number in that "pool." She would have left the question blank.

  - One participant interpreted "eligible to teach" as meaning only fully-licensed substitutes. Thus, she included only fully licensed substitutes in her count, even though the district also uses substitutes who are not fully licensed.

  - One participant provided the number of substitutes used, rather than those who were available.

- None of the participants included substitutes who teach only prekindergarten, postsecondary, or adult education.

Recommendations

- No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 2

Does this district have a policy to encourage teacher attendance or prevent teachers from using an excessive amount of unplanned leave?
(e.g., buying back unused leave, counting unused leave toward retirement, rewards for perfect attendance)

__ Yes

__ No

Findings

- In general, participants easily understood what this item was asking and responded accurately.

- All participants interpreted "unplanned leave" as taking sick or personal leave that was not scheduled in advance.

- When asked to provide examples of policies that might be included in this item, participants' responses included:

  - buying back unused sick and/or personal leave (annually or at retirement);

  - applying unused sick leave toward retirement; and

  - receiving a bonus for not exceeding a certain number of sick days in a school year.

- One participant responded "Yes" but was unsure if the policy in his district should count, as it is actually a stipulation in the teachers' contracts and not technically a district-level policy.

Recommendations

- No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 3

Are the following criteria used in considering applicants for teaching positions in this district?
Mark (X) only one box.

    a. **Full standard state certification for field to be taught**
        ☐ Yes
        ☐ No

    b. **At least emergency or temporary state certification or endorsement for field to be taught**
        ☐ Yes
        ☐ No

    c. **Graduation from a state-approved teacher education program**
        ☐ Yes
        ☐ No

    d. **College major or minor in field to be taught**
        ☐ Yes
        ☐ No

    e. **Passing score on a STATE test of basic skills**
        ☐ Yes
        ☐ No

    f. **Passing score on a STATE test of subject knowledge**
        ☐ Yes
        ☐ No

    g. **Passing score on a local DISTRICT test of basic skills or subject knowledge**
        ☐ Yes
        ☐ No

    h. **Passing score on the Praxis Series Core Battery Test of Professional Knowledge**
        ☐ Yes
        ☐ No

    i. **Passing score on the Praxis II: Subject Assessment in a specific content area**
        ☐ Yes
        ☐ No

    j. **Passing score on the Praxis III: Teacher Performance Assessment in a specific content area**
        ☐ Yes
        ☐ No

Findings

- Some participants were unsure how to respond to some or all of *parts (c)* through *(j)* because these criteria are part of the requirement to be certified in their state, and are not specifically considered a *district* requirement. All of these participants responded "Yes" to the relevant items.

- *Part (a):*

  o Some participants were unsure of what was meant by "full standard state certification" and thought this needed to be clarified. These participants were unclear whether this would include preliminary or alternative certification.

  o Another participant responded "Yes" (even though it does not matter what certification applicants hold) because she thought the district would "look bad" if she said "No."

- *Part (c):* For one participant, the answer to *part (c)* would be "Yes" for some teachers but "No" for others—for example, people with a business degree may teach business courses in his district without having graduated from a state-approved teacher education program. The participant responded "No" to this item.

- *Part (d):*

  o For one participant, a major or minor in the field to be taught would only be considered if it were necessary for "highly qualified" status. She indicated that she would write in "it depends."

  o Another participant responded "No" to this item because she felt it did not apply because there are only elementary school teachers in the district.

- *Part (g):* One respondent answered "Yes" to this item, even though the district does not have a test. He responded "Yes" because if the district did have a test, it would be required.

- *Parts (e)* through *(j):*

  o Two participants had difficulty with these items because they were not sufficiently familiar with the requirements to be sure of the correct answers. However, if actually completing the survey, at least one of the two would have asked someone who knew the answers.

  o Those participants who knew that the state test was the Praxis answered "Yes" to both the state and Praxis questions.

Recommendations

- To clear up confusion about how to respond if a certain criterion is applied to some but not all applicants or positions, consider revising the wording as follows:

  "Are the following criteria REQUIRED for any teaching positions in this district?"

ITEM 4a

LAST SCHOOL YEAR (2008–2009), how many teachers of the following types were DISMISSED or did not have their contracts renewed?
Record HEAD COUNTS, not FTEs (full-time equivalent).
If none, please mark (X) the box.
If this district does not have a tenure system, please distinguish teachers based on the definitions provided.
Please include only classroom teachers, which means any staff member who currently teaches any regularly scheduled classes in any of grades K–12. Please do NOT include short-term substitute teachers, aides, or librarians who only teach library skills or how to use the library.

    a. **Total DISMISSED teachers: Include both tenured and nontenured teachers.**

        __ __ __ Teachers

        ☐ None → GO TO item 6

Findings

- Nine of the participants reported that at least one teacher had been dismissed. For this entire series of items (*4a* through *4d*), only one reported the FTE rather than head count.

- All participants followed the skip pattern correctly.

- Participants had a consistent understanding of who should be included in the count. For example, none of them said they would include a teacher's aide, but all would count a special education teacher who worked in several different classes.

- The wording in the question stem, "DISMISSED or did not have their contracts renewed," does not match the wording under *part (a)*, "Total DISMISSED teachers." While no participants pointed this out, it could be potentially confusing to respondents.

Recommendations

- In order to maintain consistency between the question and the response option, consider revising the wording under *(a)* as follows:
  "Total teachers who were DISMISSED or did not have their contracts renewed."

ITEM 4b

    b. **Total dismissed teachers as a result of POOR PERFORMANCE:**
        Include both tenured and nontenured teachers.

        __ __ __ Teachers

        ☐ None → GO TO item 5

Findings

- Most participants did not have any difficulty with this item.

- Two participants said they did not know what was meant by "poor performance."

  o One respondent initially indicated that all of the dismissed teachers were dismissed as a result of poor performance; however, when she got to *Item 5* she said she would change her answer to

"None" for *Items 4b* through *4d* and would write in "duties and responsibilities" under "6—Other" in *Item 5*.

   o The other respondent defined "poor performance" as getting three consecutive poor annual reviews, at which point the district would not rehire the teacher. She said that none of the teachers in her district were dismissed for that reason, but were not rehired because they failed to meet "highly qualified teacher" requirements. (This was her response to *Item 5*.)

- All participants who responded to this item followed the skip pattern correctly.

Recommendations

- Consider providing a definition for and/or examples of "poor performance."

ITEM 4c

   c. **Of those teachers dismissed as a result of POOR PERFORMANCE, how many were nontenured teachers?**
   Nontenured teachers are <u>often</u> relatively inexperienced or novices. This includes teachers in their initial induction year, teachers who are on year-to-year contracts, and those teachers who have not entered a more permanent status, traditionally referred to as tenure.
   ☐ None **or** __ __ __   Teachers

Findings

- All participants indicated that their district has a tenure system.

- Some participants provided more specific definitions of a "nontenured teacher," most of which included a description of a probationary period. However, all felt that the definition provided was sufficient and clear.

- All participants who said they understood the term "poor performance" found it easy to answer this question.

Recommendations

- No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 4d

   d. **Of those teachers dismissed as a result of POOR PERFORMANCE, how many were tenured teachers?**
   Tenured teachers have satisfactorily completed a probationary period and were given a contract as a career or permanent employee.
   ☐ None **or** __ __ __   Teachers

Findings

- All participants who responded to this item said "None."

- All participants who said they understood the term "poor performance" found it easy to answer this question.

- Some participants had a different or more specific definition of "tenured teacher," but said the definition given was sufficient and clear.

Recommendations

- No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 5

From the list below, select the first, second, and third most common reasons that teachers were dismissed or did not have their contracts renewed LAST SCHOOL YEAR (2009–2010).

    1—Layoffs due to school closings or school mergers

    2—Layoffs due to reduced enrollment

    3—Layoffs due to a reduction in force, unrelated to reduced enrollment or school closings

    4—Failure to meet Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) requirements

       (Generally, to be Highly Qualified, teachers must 1) have a bachelor's degree; 2) hold full state certification or licensure, including an "alternative certification"; and 3) demonstrate competency in the subject area(s) they teach. The HQT requirement is a provision under No Child Left Behind [NCLB].)

    5—Poor performance of teachers

    6—Other → *Please specify* _____

Enter the appropriate code (1-6) for each reason.

    __ Most common reason

    __ Second most common reason

    __ Third most common reason

Findings

- Most participants had no difficulty identifying the most, second most, and third most common reasons teachers were dismissed in their district last school year. In cases where there was only one reason, participants left the second and third reasons blank.

- One participant responded based on the most common reasons teachers are *typically* dismissed in the district, not just for that past year.

- Five participants selected "6—Other" as one of the most common reasons teachers were dismissed. These participants provided the following descriptions of why teachers had been dismissed:

    o misconduct with students;

    o personal reasons;

    o duties and responsibilities;

    o not a good fit;

    o interns failing to complete all requirements to obtain their teaching license or certificate; and

    o temporary hires being let go.

- One participant had two "other" reasons. For "6—Other" she wrote *"duties and responsibilities,"* and listed *"6"* as the most common reason. She then created "7—Other," wrote *"temporary hires,"* and listed *"7"* as the third most common reason. This participant listed "5—Poor performance of teachers" as the second most common reason.

- Several participants suggested that "inappropriate behavior with students," should be added to the list of possible responses. Another thought the item should specify how dismissals due to "budget issues" should be categorized.

Recommendations

- Consider adding **"inappropriate behavior with students"** as a response option.

- Consider adding **"(e.g., due to budget cuts)"** as an example for response option 3.

ITEM 6

Is there a salary schedule for TEACHERS in this district?
    __ Yes→GO TO item 8.
    __ No

Findings

- All participants responded "Yes" to this item.

- None of the participants had any difficulty with the item itself; however, approximately half missed the skip pattern and responded to *Item 7*.

Recommendations

- Because problems with the skip pattern may be due to the testing environment, no modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 7

What would be the normal yearly base salary for a teacher with a bachelor's degree and no teaching experience in this district?
Please report salaries in whole dollars.
    $__ __ __, __ __ __.00 per year → GO TO item 9a

Findings

(Note: Due to the skip pattern in Item 6, only respondents from districts that do not have a salary schedule would respond to this item)

- While all of the districts represented in the interviews had salary schedules, respondents were asked to read through the item and give feedback. All participants said this item was clear and they would not have any difficulty responding to it.

Recommendations

- No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 8

According to the salary schedule, what is the normal yearly base salary for—
Please respond to each of the options.
If this district's salary schedule does not include the specific degree and experience combination,
report the salary that a person with this degree and experience would earn.
Report in whole dollars.

    a. A teacher with a bachelor's degree and no teaching experience?

        $__ __ __, __ __ __.00 per year

    b. A teacher with a bachelor's degree and 10 years of teaching experience?

        $__ __ __, __ __ __.00 per year

    c. A teacher with a master's degree and no teaching experience?

        $__ __ __, __ __ __.00 per year

    d. A teacher with a master's degree and 10 years of teaching experience?

        $__ __ __, __ __ __.00 per year

    e. A teacher with a master's degree and 15 years of teaching experience?

        $__ __ __, __ __ __.00 per year

    f. A teacher at the highest possible step on the salary schedule?

        $__ __ __, __ __ __.00 per year

Findings

- Most participants were able to use their district's salary schedule and fill in these answers without any difficulty.

- In all cases, participants' responses to *part (e)* were several thousand dollars higher than their response to *part (d)*. Responses to *part (f)* were $7,000 to $27,000 higher than responses to *part (d)*.

- One respondent found it difficult to answer this question because the salary schedule in her district is organized by credits, not by educational degrees. For that reason, she noted that a Master's degree might fall into one of several columns on the schedule.

- For two districts, teachers get a specific stipend for having a Master's degree. One participant wrote in this stipend separately ("+$2,479") on *parts (c)* through *(f)*. The other included it in her answer for *parts (c)* through *(e)*, but wrote it in separately ("+$2,000") only on *part (f)*.

- *Part (f):* One respondent wrote in the stipend that teachers receive for National Board Certification ("+$2,479") as well as teaching a hard-to-staff subject ("+$500").

Recommendations

- Consider including the following direction:
  "Include in your responses any stipends that teachers receive for educational degrees, but not stipends that are provided for other reasons (e.g., National Board certification)."

- To limit the number of instructions that are provided with this item, consider eliminating the instruction to **"Report in whole dollars."**

ITEM 9a

a. **Does this district currently use any pay incentives to recruit or retain teachers to teach in fields of shortage?**

__ Yes

__ No → GO TO item 10a

Findings

- Most participants did not have any difficulty responding to this item.

- One participant was unsure whether to include incentives that were provided by the state, rather than the district. Because the question specifically asks if the district uses incentives, she answered "No."

- One participant answered "Yes," referring to incentives given to school psychologists.

All but one participant followed the skip pattern correctly.

Recommendations

Depending on the intent of the item, consider revising the wording as follows:
"Does this district or state currently use any pay incentives…"

Alternatively, consider including an instruction that indicates whether participants should include incentives paid by the state.

To increase the likelihood that people who should complete *Item 9b* do complete it, consider revising the wording of *Item 9a*, for example, **"Does this district or state currently use any pay incentives to recruit or retain teachers?"**

Depending on the intent of the item, consider including an instruction that indicates whether participants should include incentives paid to nurses, school psychologists, and similar staff.

ITEM 9b

Are pay incentives offered to recruit and retain teachers to teach in the following fields?

General elementary

__　　　　　Yes

__　　　　　No

Special education

__　　　　　Yes

__　　　　　No

English or language arts

__　　　　　Yes

__　　　　　No

Social studies

__　　　　　Yes

__　　　　　No

Computer science

__　　　　　Yes

__　　　　　No

Mathematics

__　　　　　Yes

__　　　　　No

Physical sciences

__　　　　　Yes

__　　　　　No

Biological or life sciences

__　　　　　Yes

__　　　　　No

English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual education

__　　　　　Yes

__　　　　　No

Foreign languages

__　　　　　Yes

__　　　　　No

Music or art

__　　　　　Yes

__　　　　　No

Career or technical education

__　　　　　Yes

__　　　　　No

Findings

Most participants did not have any difficulties with this Item, and their responses were consistent with *Item 9a*.

One participant had responded "Yes" to *Item 9a* because incentives are given to school psychologists, but she did not know where to reflect that in *Item 9b*. She responded "No" to all parts of the question.

One participant had answered "No" to *Item 9a* but responded "Yes" to all parts of *Item 9b* because the district gives a "local supplement" to all teachers.

Some suggestions for additional options included: "allied professionals" (e.g., nurses, school psychologists), library specialists, and remedial residing specialists.

Recommendations

Depending on the intent of the item, consider adding response options that reflect the staff suggested by respondents (listed above).

ITEM 10a

This school year, does this district use an alternative compensation system in addition to or instead of a salary schedule or hourly pay for any employees?
(An alternative compensation system is any structure of pay that is not based on a traditional salary schedule but on other factors such as performance, hard-to-staff schools or positions, professional development, professional leadership, etc.)

__   Yes

__   No → GO TO item 11

Findings

Most respondents did not have difficulties with this item. All but two responded "No" and followed the skip pattern correctly.

The "alternative compensation systems" offered by the two participants who said "Yes" were as follows:

One respondent said that if the district meets a student achievement goal, two required after-school meetings are eliminated. She considered this an alternative way of compensating teachers for student performance.

The other respondent interpreted the phrase "traditional salary schedule" in the instructions to mean the salary schedule used for teachers. Because the salary schedules used for administrative and support staff are different from that used for teachers, she responded "Yes" to this item.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 10b

Which of the following employees are paid according to an alternative compensation system and to what extent?

	None of these employees	**All schools or employees**	**Pilot/experimental schools or employees**	**Selected schools or employees (e.g., high schools only)**
1. School administrators (e.g., principals)	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. School support staff (e.g., teacher aides, bus drivers, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐

Findings

Most participants skipped this item because they had answered "No" to *Item 10a*. None had any difficulty understanding what the question was asking.

The responses to this item from the two participants who said "Yes" to *Item 10a* were consistent with what they were considering "alternative compensation systems" in their districts.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

...

ITEM 11				
Which of the following are features of the compensation system used for TEACHERS in this district?				
	a. Offered to any TEACHER in district?	**b. What form of compensation is offered to TEACHERS?** *Mark (X) all that apply*		
		Permanent increase to base salary	**Cash bonus (excluding reimbursements)**	**Noncash bonus (e.g., loan forgiveness)**
1. Years of service (i.e., step increase)	__ Yes → __ No ↓	❑	❑	❑
2. Completion of degrees or credit hours	__ Yes → __ No ↓	❑	❑	❑
3. Completion of National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification	__ Yes → __ No ↓	❑	❑	❑
4. Completion of professional development	__ Yes → __ No ↓	❑	❑	❑
5. Results of peer evaluations	__ Yes → __ No ↓	❑	❑	❑
6. Results of administrator evaluations	__ Yes → __ No ↓	❑	❑	❑
7. Results of student test scores—entire school	__ Yes → __ No ↓	❑	❑	❑
8. Results of student test scores—individual teachers	__ Yes → __ No ↓	❑	❑	❑
9. Meeting student nontest learning or behavioral objectives—entire school	__ Yes → __ No ↓	❑	❑	❑
10. Meeting student nontest learning or behavioral objectives—individual teachers	__ Yes → __ No ↓	❑	❑	❑

11. Assignment to a hard-to-staff school	__ Yes → __ No ↓	❑	❑	❑
12. Teaching a hard-to-staff subject	__ Yes → __ No ↓	❑	❑	❑
13. Other → *Please specify* _____	__ Yes → __ No ↓	❑	❑	❑

Findings

In general, respondents were able to identify which methods of compensation were employed by their district, and the type of compensation offered. All teachers indicated that they provided a permanent increase to base salary for years of service *(part 1)* and completion of degrees or credits *(part 2).*

Some participants were not sure what was meant by "nontest learning or behavioral objectives" in *parts (9)* and *(10)*. When asked to provide examples of what these objectives might be, participants mentioned behavioral objectives for special education students, citizenship, and "following the rules." However, none of the participants could provide examples of how these objectives could be tied to compensation.

The participant whose district allows teachers to attend fewer meetings if they meet achievement targets responded "Yes" to *part (7)* and selected "noncash bonus."

Based on participants' responses to *Item 10a*, none should have responded "Yes" to *Parts 3* to *13* of this item. However, this was not always the case:

Part (3): More than one-third of participants indicated that they offer a permanent increase to salary or cash bonus to teachers who complete NBPTS certification. None of these participants, however, responded "Yes" to *Item 10a*.

Part (4): Two of the participants said their districts gave teachers a permanent increase to their base salary for completing professional development. Neither had responded "Yes" to *Item 10a*.

Part (6): One participant indicated that teachers may receive a permanent increase to their base salary tied to the results of administrator evaluations. She did not consider this to be part of an "alternative compensation system," and responded "No" to *Item 10a*.

Part (12): One participant said "Yes" and selected "permanent increase to base salary" because they do have a permanent increase to base pay for hard-to-staff subjects. This participant did not consider this to be part of an "alternative compensation system," and responded "No" to *Item 10a*.

Part (13): Two participants selected "Yes" and "cash bonus" for this item—one because school psychologists are given a cash bonus, and the other because teachers who mentor another teacher over the summer are given a cash bonus. As above, both responded "No" to *Item 10a*.

All participants were able to distinguish between *part (7)* and *part (8)*.

The current wording for this item asks about the features of the compensation system for "teachers." When asked if their answers would change if the question specified "K–12 teachers," participants indicated that their responses would remain the same.

Recommendations

There were a number of inconsistencies between participants' responses to *Item 10a* and *Item 11*. Because of these inconsistencies, we would recommend eliminating *Item 10a* and defining whether a district has an alternative compensation system based on their answers to *Item 11*.

ITEM 12

Does this district grant high school diplomas?
Do not include vocational certificates, certificates of attendance, or certificates of completion.

__   Yes

__   No→ GO TO item 14a

Findings

No participants had any difficulty with this item.

All participants followed the skip pattern correctly.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 13

For high school graduates of the class of 2010, how many years of instruction are required in each of the following areas for a standard diploma?
Record the number to the nearest TENTH, e.g., 3.0, 2.5, etc.
If none, please mark (X) the box.

English or language arts

☐   None **or** __.__ Years

Mathematics

☐   None **or** __.__ Years

Computer science

☐   None **or** __.__ Years

Social sciences, social studies (e.g., history, geography, economics)

☐   None **or** __.__ Years

Science

☐   None **or** __.__ Years→ **1. Physical or biological science**s

↓   __ None or __.__ Years

Foreign languages

__   None **or** __.__ Years

Findings

Most participants had no difficulties with *parts (a), (b), (c), (d),* and *(f)*.

Most participants found *part (e)* to be very confusing, and some indicated that due to their confusion they would skip the question altogether. There were several issues that came up related to this part of the item:

- Participants were unsure whether *part (e1)* was supposed to be a subset of *part (e)*. Based on responses, it appeared that most assumed that it was a subset—that is, that the response to *part (e1)* had to be less than or equal *to the number they placed in part (e)*.

- Two participants were not sure why physical and biological sciences were treated as a single group. Because their districts require one year of biology and one year of physical science, they both wrote in under *part (e1)*"one year of each."

- Most participants could not think of any science courses that would not fall under "physical or biological sciences." Therefore, several commented that they did not understand why *part (e1)* was separated from *part (e)*.

- Some participants thought this item was referring to whether students were required to take specific physical science or biology courses. In other words, if students were required to take one year of biology, one year of chemistry, and two years of additional science courses of their choosing, these participants would provide a response of 2.0 for *part (e1)*—even if the two additional courses students took would likely be biology or physical science courses as well.

Recommendations

Consider revising the wording of Item *part (e1)* to more clearly reflect the intent of the question.

ITEM 14

Does this district have any prekindergarten students?

__   Yes

__   No→ GO TO item 15a

Findings

Most participants did not have any difficulties with this item.

One participant hesitated because her district does not enroll any prekindergarten students, but does offer services to children of that age (e.g., rehabilitation services and speech therapy). She responded "No."

All participants followed the skip pattern correctly.

Recommendations

Consider revising the wording as follows: **"Does this district enroll any prekindergarten students?"**

ITEM 14b

Around the first of October, how many prekindergarten students were enrolled in this district?

__ __ __, __ __ __ Prekindergarten students

Findings

Most participants did not have any difficulties with this item.

The participant who had trouble with the previous item said this item was clearer because of the use of the word "enroll" rather than "have."

One of the participants indicated that she would probably estimate the number, but would be able to provide a good estimate.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 15a

Does this district participate in the National School Lunch Program?

__   Yes

__   No→ End of survey

Findings

Participants did not have any difficulties with this item.

All participants followed the skip pattern correctly.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 15b

b.   Around the first of October, how many students in this district were APPROVED for free or reduced-price lunches?
Report a separate count for prekindergarten students.
If none, please mark (X) the box.

☐   None **or** __ __ __ , __ __ __   K–12 students approved

☐   None **or** __ __ __ , __ __ __   Prekindergarten students approved

---

Findings

Most participants did not have any difficulties with this item.

One participant said she would have to estimate her response to this item because the list of students receiving free or reduced-price lunches is constantly being updated and they do not keep a historical record. She noted that the closer to the date she was asked, the better the estimate would be.

One participant was able to provide the *total* number of students approved for free or reduced price lunch, but was not able to break that number down between K–12 and PreK students. She indicated that if the survey came during the school year, she would be able to better answer the question because the person who has access to that information is a 10-month employee and is not there during the summer.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

Items Related to Collecting Information and Increasing Participation

In addition to testing the previous items for the Schools and Staffing Survey, the Census provided ICF Macro with several other questions related to collecting information and increasing participation from districts. Responses to these items are provided below.

Principal Contact Information

All but one participant indicated that they would be willing to provide the U.S. Department of Education (ED) with the names and e-mail addresses of the principals in their district. The remaining participant indicated that she would have to first get permission from the superintendant.

Six participants said the list of schools and principals would be finalized in July, two said it could be as early as May, two said no sooner than August 1, and the remaining participant indicated that the lists would be finalized in June.

All but one of the participants indicated that their district had a public website with principal e-mails.

All participants would be willing to provide principals' names and e-mail addresses over the phone for up to approximately 10 schools. All were also willing to provide this information by e-mail as an Excel attachment. However, participants in smaller districts thought it would be easier to do so in the body of an e-mail, rather than as an attachment.

All participants said that they could provide a table of principal contact information either for all schools in their district, or for a subset identified by ED. A few thought it might be easier to provide the information for a subset only, but most had no preference. All participants were also willing to fax principal contact information to the Census Bureau or ED.

All but two participants would be willing to upload a file to a website, provided that it was secure. The other two were concerned that uploading the file might be more complicated or time-consuming than e-mailing or faxing the information.

Teacher Contact Information

All but one participant said they would be willing and able to provide ED with a list of all teachers working at their schools, and would be able to identify those teachers who were in their first year of teaching. The participant who was unwilling to do so said it would be cumbersome to get this information. She also had concerns about teachers' privacy, and indicated that she would have to know exactly what the information would be used for.

Grade Range and Closing Information for Schools

All participants said they would be willing and able to provide the range of grades served by the schools in their district and to identify whether any of the schools had closed.

Ideas for Increasing Participation

Participants were asked whether they had any ideas of what could be included with the survey to make it more likely that districts would participate. Suggestions provided by participants included providing a specific due date for when districts should respond, including a "press release" with more information about the study, or providing more detailed information about how participants' privacy would be ensured.

Testing of Items for the School Questionnaire

Description of Participants

Twelve principals were interviewed to obtain their feedback on items on the school questionnaire. Four were elementary school principals, four were middle school principals, and four were high school principals. The following states and the District of Columbia were represented:

- Arizona;
- Maryland;
- Michigan;
- Minnesota;
- Ohio;
- Pennsylvania;
- South Carolina;
- Wisconsin; and
- District of Columbia

Half of these participants were charter school principals, five were public school principals, and one was a private school principal.

Summary of Findings

The following section summarizes the results of the interviews testing items for the School SASS Questionnaire. Under each item tested, we describe key findings as well as recommendations.

ITEM 1a

Does this school have any special requirements for admission other than proof of immunization, age, or residence?

__   Yes

__   No → GO TO item 2a

Findings

Approximately one-third of participants did not follow the skip pattern correctly. After responding "No" to this item, they continued to *Item 1b* instead of going to *Item 2a*.

Only one of the 12 respondents had admission requirements at their school that could be considered "special"—a principal at an alternative school that only accepts "over aged" students. However, this participant responded "No" to this item.

One principal at a public elementary school seemed to misread the question and responded "yes," even though her school had no special requirements for admission.

Recommendations

Although one-third of participants did not follow the skip pattern correctly, this could be partly due to the fact that they were in a testing environment and thought they had to answer every question, even though they were initially told to follow all skip patterns.

To better emphasize the skip pattern, consider rephrasing the question as follows,

"Does this school use any requirements other than proof of immunization, age, or residence when deciding whether to admit students?"

ITEM 1b

Does this school use the following requirements for admission?

Admission test
__   Yes
__   No

Standardized achievement test
__   Yes
__   No

Academic record
__   Yes
__   No

Special student needs (e.g., students "at risk" or with disabilities)
__   Yes
__   No

Special student aptitudes, skills, or talents
__   Yes
__   No

Personal interview
__   Yes
__   No

Recommendations
__   Yes
__   No

Lottery system
__   Yes
__   No

School-parent compact
(This is a contract between school community members [e.g., parents, principals, teachers, and students] that acknowledges the shared responsibility for student learning and/or the school's policies)
__   Yes
__   No

Findings

Participants who should have skipped this question proceeded to answer it, by identifying items from the list that they used in their admission process. For example:

- Several schools requested students' academic record *(part 3)* and so principals in these schools selected this option even though it was not a requirement for admission.

- Several charter schools also used a lottery system only if they had more students trying to register than available spaces in a given year. Some of these principals responded "Yes," and others responded "No."

- All participants were asked to provide feedback on this question regardless of whether or not they should have answered it. Questions some participants were confused by or commented on are summarized below:

  o *Part (2):* One alternative school principal who uses standardized tests to determine the academic level of incoming students was not sure how to answer this question. He left it blank.

o *Part (4):* Two charter school principals said they did not understand what this question was asking.

o *Part (8):* For the most part, participants shared a common understanding of how a "lottery system" worked. However, some principals explained it as a random draw process that *all students* needed to participate in to be admitted to the school, while other principals explained it as the random draw process that *waitlisted students* participated in to fill remaining seats.

o *Part (9):* Most participants understanding of a "school-parent compact" aligned with the definition provided in the item. However, one participant had a very different understanding. She stated, "A compact would be for parents who do work for the school. Like parents that work to help to get a charter started or make other contributions. The compact ensures admission of their child in exchange for the work." A compact (the listed definition or her own definition) was not a requirement of admission to this principal's school, so her confusion about what a compact is did not impact her answer.

Recommendations

As shown below, consider making four changes to this item:

- Changing the wording of the question;

- Adding the phrase "student scores" to *parts (1)* and *(2)*;

- Changing the examples for *parts (4)* and *(5)*; and

- Changing the wording of *part (8)*.

Does this school use the following criteria when deciding whether to admit students?

Student scores on an admission test

Student scores on a standardized achievement test

Academic record

Special needs (e.g., giving preference to students "at-risk" or students with disabilities)

Special aptitudes, skills, or talents (e.g., giving preference to academically gifted, or fine arts students)

A personal interview

Recommendations

A lottery system in which new students must participate

A signed school-parent compact *(This is a contract between school community members [e.g., parents, principals, teachers, and students] that acknowledges the shared responsibility for student learning and/or the school's policies.)*

ITEM 2

Are the following programs or services currently available AT THIS SCHOOL for students in any of grades K–12 or comparable ungraded levels, regardless of funding source?

Extended day program providing instruction beyond the normal school day for students who need academic assistance

__   Yes

__   No

Before-school or afterschool day care programs

__   Yes

__   No

Before-school or afterschool enrichment programs

__   Yes

__   No

Findings

Every participant responded "Yes" to at least one question.

Principals had different understandings of what distinguished *part (a)* (extended day programs) from *part (c)* (enrichment programs). Most participants thought that *item (a)* referred to programs that provide support for children that are struggling or need remediation, while *option (c)* would be open to all students or those who are "on-track." However:

- Two principals thought there was no difference between *part (a)* and *(c)*, because all before-school and afterschool programs are extended day programs that offer enrichment.

- Another principal thought that programs under *part (a)* would be open to all students, while enrichment programs under *part (c)* would be open to struggling students or those who volunteer.

- Most principals shared a common understanding of the difference between *part (b)* (day care programs) and *part (c)* (enrichment programs). They indicated that day care programs did not offer instruction to students, and they were primarily to "babysit" students. A few principals did comment that a before or afterschool day care program could also be considered an extended day program.

- Two principals commented that they were unfamiliar with the phrase "comparable ungraded levels." One thought it referred to schools that offered prekindergarten. The other thought that the use of the term "ungraded" was referring to how schools compared with each other (i.e., use of "grades" for accountability). Both principals, however, eventually ignored the phrase and continued to answer the question as intended.

Recommendations

As shown below, consider making two changes to this item:

- Changing the wording of *parts (a)* and *(c)* to make the difference between them clearer;

- Changing the order so that *parts (a)* and *(c)* are adjacent (again, to make the two parts easier for participants to distinguish).

Before-school or afterschool programs providing students who need academic assistance with instruction beyond the normal school day (e.g., tutoring, homework help)

Before-school or afterschool enrichment programs providing students with advanced academic instruction not available in the regular curriculum (e.g. <<insert appropriate examples here>>)

Before-school or afterschool day care programs

ITEM 3a

For THIS school year (2009–10), were there teaching vacancies in this school; that is, teaching positions for which teachers were recruited and interviewed?

__   Yes

__   No → GO TO item 4

Findings

Most principals did not have difficulty answering this question. However, there were some inconsistencies in how the question was interpreted.

One principal knew he had vacancies for 2009–2010 in June of 2009, and filled the vacancies in June 2009 prior to the start of the 2009–2010 school year. He did not consider these positions when answering this question.

Another principal interpreted "for which teachers were recruited and interviewed" to mean positions for which he had multiple candidates. He indicated that if he had a teaching vacancy that he filled using a current teacher, he would not count that position for this question.

One principal interpreted "for which teachers were recruited and interviewed" to mean positions for which he recruited and interviewed but did not hire a teacher—that is, unfilled vacancies.

One principal said her school does not "recruit," because all vacancies are sent to the teachers' union and she only interviews and selects from the candidates the union provides to her. However, she still responded "Yes" to this question as she thought this was what was intended.

Another principal also indicated that he does not "recruit" because he routinely has multiple candidates for each position and does not have to. This principal therefore responded "No" to this question.

Recommendations

Consider rephrasing this question as follows:

"For THIS school year (2009–2010), were there any teaching vacancies in this school that you filled, or tried to fill?"

ITEM 3b

b.   **How easy or difficult was it to fill the vacancies for this school year in each of the following fields?**

Mark (X) one box on each line.

	No positions in this school	No vacancy in this field	Easy	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Could not fill the vacancy
(1) General elementary	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(2) Special education	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(3) English or language arts	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(4) Social studies	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(5) Computer science	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(6) Mathematics	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(7) Biology or life sciences	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(8) Physical sciences	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(9) Other natural sciences	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(10) English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual education	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(11) Foreign languages	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(12) Music or art	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(13) Career or technical education	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Findings

The majority of participants (8 of 12) did not accurately distinguish between the columns "No positions in this school," and "No vacancies in this field." In these cases, principals selected one column when they should have selected the other.

One principal left the entire row blank if he did not have that position in his school.

When specifically asked about the difference between the two columns, several principals realized that they had answered this item incorrectly. However, one principal still could not explain the difference, while two said there was no difference between the columns.

There was some inconsistency in how middle school principals responded to the questions about science positions. These principals indicated that their science teachers generally did not specialize in specific subjects, but taught grade-level curricula that covered multiple subjects. One principal "triple-counted" these teachers (i.e., included the teacher under all three science categories), while other principals counted the teacher once under the primary science content taught by the teacher.

All high school principals shared a common understanding of what positions could be classified as biology or life sciences. About half the high school principals were able to provide an example of a "physical science" course, and only one high school principal could provide an example of an "other natural science" course; her examples were botany or astronomy.

Recommendations

Provide examples of physical sciences (e.g., physics, chemistry) and "other natural sciences" (e.g., environmental science, earth science).

Consider adding a "middle school science" or "general science" position to the list.

Consider different labels for these categories (e.g., "Position does not exist at this school" and "No vacancies this year.")

ITEM 4

Is this school a public CHARTER school?
(A charter school is a public school that, in accordance with an enabling state statute, has been granted a charter exempting it from selected state or local rules and regulations. A charter school may be a newly created school or it may previously have been a public or private school.)

__   Yes

__   No → *End survey*

Findings

Most principals did not have any difficulty answering this question. However, two principals (one of a charter and one of a traditional public school) commented that charter schools are not necessarily exempted from state or local rules. In neither case did this impact their answers to the question.

Recommendations

Although there was some disagreement with the definition of charter school used, all participants understood the question. No modifications are recommended.

ITEM 5

Which of the following best describes the origin of this public charter school?

__   A converted public school

__   A converted Bureau of Indian Education-funded school

__   A converted private school

__   A school originally established as a charter

Findings

All six principals who worked at charter schools knew the origin of their school, and most did not have difficulty answering this item. One principal of a school originally established as a charter, however, said

she did not understand the terms "converted public school," or "converted Bureau of Indian Education-funded school."

One principal said his school took over the charter of another charter school. He correctly responded, "A school originally established as a charter."

One charter school principal added that private charter schools exist in Atlanta, and the authors of this survey may want to distinguish this type of school from other types.

Recommendations

No modifications are suggested for this item.

ITEM 6

Who granted the current charter?

__   A school district

__   The State Board of Education

__   Postsecondary institution

__   A state charter-granting agency

__   Other → What is the name of the chartering agency?

     _____

Findings

Charter school principals did not have any difficulty answering this item.

One principal commented that a charter school could fall into more than one category if its charter was granted by a partnership (e.g., of a State Board of Education and a postsecondary institution). Other participants thought that the categories were mutually exclusive.

Recommendations

No modifications are suggested for this item.

ITEM 7

Which of the following best describes the governance structure of this public charter school?

__   An independent or standalone charter school

__   Part of a nonprofit charter management organization or network of schools that are managed by a central agency

__   Part of a for-profit management organization or network of schools that are managed by a central agency

__   Part of a traditional public school district

__   Other → *Please describe* _____

Findings

All charter school principals knew the governance structure of their school and were able to respond correctly to the item.

One principal did not understand the phrase "network of schools that are managed by a central agency." His school is managed by a company that also manages other charter schools (a charter management organization), but he did not consider this a "network of schools." After some time, he eventually ignored that phrase in the question and was able to answer the question correctly.

Recommendations

No modifications are suggested for this item.

ITEM 8a

Does this school have a library media center?

A library media center is an organized collection of printed and/or audiovisual and/or computer resources which is administered as a unit, is located in a designated place or places, and makes resources and services available to students, teachers, and administrators.

A library media center may be called a school library, media center, resource center, information center, instructional materials center, learning resource center, or any other similar name.

__   Yes

__   No → *End survey*

Findings

Participants did not have any difficulty answering this item. All indicated that the description of a "library media center" seemed appropriate to them.

Two respondents suggested that the item refer to a "library/media center," rather than "library media center." One of the two indicated that her school had both a library and a media center, and thought the item should not treat them as the same; however, this did not appear to affect her response.

Recommendations

No modifications are suggested for this item.

Item 8b

Is the library media center open to community members who do not attend, or have children who attend, this school?

__   Yes

__   No → *End survey*

Findings

Several participants found the wording of the phrase "community members who do not attend, or have children who attend this school" to be confusing. One person, for example, pointed out that this phrase could be interpreted as referring to community members who either (a) do not attend this school, or (b) have children who attend this school—when, obviously, the intent of the item is the *opposite* of (b).

Two respondents commented that community groups (such as church organizations) can rent their school facilities outside of school hours through an outside agency, such that the school would not be involved in the transaction. They said that while these groups typically rent auditoriums or other open spaces, they did not see a reason why the outside groups could not also rent the library media center. However, both respondents answered "No" to this item because they assumed that was not the intent of the item.

Recommendations

Replace the phrase "community members who do not attend, or have children who attend, this school" with "community members who do not have children who attend this school." The meaning of the suggested change is slightly different from the original in that it leaves out the reference to community members who do not attend the school themselves. We believe this is unlikely to be a problem, because most survey respondents would not consider current students to be "community members."

If NCES does not wish to change the meaning of the phrase in question, we recommend using the phrase "community members who do not attend this school and do not have children who attend this school.

Item 8c

May community members who do not attend, or have children who attend, this school use the library media center during the following times?

During regular school hours

__   Yes

__   No

During the week, outside of regular school hours

__   Yes

__   No

On weekends, outside of regular school hours

__   Yes

__   No

Findings

Again, several participants commented on the wording of the phrase "community members who do not attend, or have children who attend, this school" as described in the findings from Item 8b (above). No additional problems arose with this question.

Participants that answered "No" to Item 8b followed the skip pattern correctly and did not respond to Item 8c. When asked how they *would have* answered, one of these participants indicated that she would have answered "Yes" to parts 2 and 3 of Item 8c. (This was one of the participants who had said "No" to Item 8b, even though the school's library media center could be *rented* by community members through an outside agency. She indicated that her answer to Item 8c reflected the times during which the library media center could be rented.)

Recommendations

If changes are made to the wording of Item 8b, implement the same changes to Item 8c for consistency. No other modifications are suggested for this item.

Item 8d

May community members who do not attend, or have children who attend, this school use library media computer workstations to access the Internet?

__   Yes

__   No, it is not permitted

__   No, there are no computer workstations

__   No, there is no internet access

Findings

As with Items 8b and 8c, several participants commented on the wording of the phrase "community members who do not attend, or have children who attend this school."

Two participants noticed that the word "center" appeared to be missing from Item 8d (i.e., referring to the phrase "library media computer workstations").

One person said that the first response option should read, "Yes, with conditions," because Internet use in her school is subject to the district's Acceptable Use policy. However, she indicated that if this option did not appear (as in the version tested), she would select "Yes."

Participants that answered "No" to Item 8b followed the skip pattern correctly, and did not answer this item. These participants were subsequently asked to review the item and provide feedback.

Recommendations

If changes are made to the wording of Items 8b and 8c, implement the same changes to Item 8d for consistency.

To maintain consistency across items, add the word "center" after the phrase "library media."

Testing of Items for the Principal Questionnaire

Description of Participants

Twelve principals were interviewed to obtain their feedback on items on the principal questionnaire. Four were elementary school principals, four were middle school principals, and four were high school principals. The following states and the District of Columbia were represented:

- Alabama;
- California;
- Illinois;
- Maryland;
- North Carolina;
- Pennsylvania;
- South Carolina;
- Wisconsin; and
- District of Columbia.

Summary of Findings

The following section summarizes the results of the interviews testing items for the principal questionnaire. Under each item tested, we describe key findings as well as recommendations. Census modified several items that were especially problematic during the initial testing of the principal SASS items. ICF Macro contacted the principals who had participated in the initial testing to test the revised items. Findings from the revised items are presented after the findings from the items originally tested.

Findings from the Initial Testing

ITEM 1

Do you currently hold a license/certificate in "school administration"?

__   Yes

__   No

Findings

Participants generally had no difficulty answering this item; all but one participant responded "Yes."

In several cases, the license/certificate held by participants were not actually in "school administration," but in other fields such as "secondary school administration," "educational leadership," or "educational administration." However, all of the participants understood what was being asked, and did not think it needed to be changed.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 2

We are interested in the importance you place on various educational goals. From the following 10 goals, which do you consider the most important, the second most important, and the third most important?

1—Building basic literacy skills (reading, math, writing, speaking)

2—Encouraging academic excellence

3—Preparing students for postsecondary education

4—Promoting occupational or vocational skills

5—Promoting good work habits and self-discipline

6—Promoting personal growth (self-esteem, self-knowledge, etc.)

7—Promoting human relations skills

8—Promoting specific moral values

9—Promoting multicultural awareness or understanding

10—Fostering religious or spiritual development

__   Most important

__   Second most important

__   Third most important

Findings

A few participants initially misunderstood the instructions, and began ranking all 10 goals before they realized they were only to rank the three most important.

Participants generally did not have any difficulty ranking their first two goals, but some had difficulty selecting the third goal because they felt there were several that were equally important at this level.

Several participants felt that there was significant overlap between the goals on this list. A few participants considered these overlaps when selecting which goals they felt were most important. One participant stated, "I'm making it easier by combining ones that are the same. Number 2 encompasses 1, 3, and 5. Number 6 encompasses 7 and 9." She then selected (in order of most important) goals 2, 6, and 8. As another example, one participant decided to include goal 6 (Promoting personal growth) as one of his top three items as he felt it also captured goal 5 (Promoting good work habits and self-discipline).

Two participants commented that goals 3 and 4 could be combined into the phrase "college and career readiness."

Participants were asked if there were any goals that were not relevant and could be excluded from the list. Many participants from public schools thought that goal 10 (Fostering religious or spiritual development) could be excluded, as it was not relevant to their situations. A few also thought goal 8 (Promoting specific moral values) could be excluded for the same reason. In fact, one public school participant commented that even if this was one of his most important goals he would not identify it on this list because there might be negative repercussions for stating that a public school was promoting specific moral values.

Recommendations

Consider providing examples of the different goals to better distinguish them. However, due to the nature of the question it is very likely that different respondents will still interpret them differently.

Depending on the intent of goals 3 and/or 4, consider rephrasing as "Promoting college and/or career readiness" to reflect current terminology.

ITEM 3
Please indicate to what extent your school has accomplished the following:

Mark (X) one box on each line.

	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	Not applicable
a. Implementing educational goals.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
b. Implementing organizational/governance goals.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
c. Establishing a secure financial base.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
d. Attracting and retaining students.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
e. Developing a student assessment system.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
f. Involving parents in the school.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏

Findings

Part (a): Participants had different understandings of the phrase "educational goals," including:

- the school's vision/mission;

- official school improvement goals;

- the goals from *Item 2* on this survey;

- goals imposed by the school district; and

- goals imposed by the state regarding Adequate Yearly Progress.

    o *part (b):* Several participants were not sure what was meant by the phrase "organizational/ governance goals."

Most public school principals initially stated that the district imposed the school's organizational/governance structure and so there were no goals that the school needed to meet.

One charter school principal stated his school's organizational structure changed as needed with the growth of the school and so there are no pre-established goals in this regard.

After further thought a few participants came up with other interpretations of what this phrase could mean, including:

- school improvement goals and school policies (such as attendance);

- the rules outlined by the superintendent with regard to standards and discipline;

- having a democratic government and school leadership team; and

- the processes in an individual school created to ensure the school runs well (e.g., scheduling class times).

Private school principals interpreted this question as follows:

- having a board of directors where all roles are mapped out and there is a clear chain of command; and

- having a governing model (e.g., president-principal).

Even though participants were not clear on what the phrase meant, they all stated that the school accomplished this goal to a "great" or "moderate" extent. The rationale given by one principal was that if he selected any other option it would appear as if his school had no structure.

Part (c): Several participants were not sure of what was meant by the phrase "securing a financial base." Again, most public school principals said their school was not responsible for securing a financial base and so were not sure how to answer this question.

Three public school principals responded "Not applicable" because their money comes from the state.

One public school principal responded "To a small extent," saying that the state gives the school the money and he allocates it.

Four public school principals responded "To a moderate extent." Two selected this option because they are keeping the school "in the black." One selected this option because he constantly seeks other funding for his school, and one because he puts the "budget together."

Two public school principals responded "To a great extent," because they monitor the funds they receive from the state.

One private school principal responded "To a moderate extent," as his school is secure enough to offer tuition assistance; the other private school principal responded "To a great extent" as they operate off a tuition base, but need other funds to run special programs.

Part (d): Public school principals generally had difficulty answering this question.

Several pointed out that they are not responsible for "attracting" students as students are assigned to the school based on where they live.

Although their situation was much the same, however, the responses from the 10 public school principals varied widely: one responded "To a small extent," three responded "To a moderate extent," five responded "To a great extent," and one responded "Not applicable."

Of the respondents who selected "To a great extent," one did so because she tries to retain students (though not attract them); another selected this option even though he said the question did not apply to public schools.

One principal selected "To a small extent," saying, "once they're in school, we try to keep them happy."

Private school principals generally did not have a problem answering this question.

Part (e): Public school principals were not clear about the level of assessment (state, local, or school) to which this question referred. Participants gave different answers based on their understanding.

One participant selected "Not applicable" because his school uses the state assessment system.

Another principal selected "To a great extent" because although his school uses the state assessment system they also "do a great job with formative assessment."

Part (f): Participants did not have difficulty answering this part.

Recommendations

If possible, provide examples in the question stem to help principals understand when it is appropriate to select the "Not applicable" option.

Based on findings from cognitive testing of this item, it is clear that participants have very different interpretations of most of these items—particularly *parts (a), (b),* and *(c)*. NCES could consider clarifying the items by adding more description. However, it is likely that due to the nature of the question, respondents will still have different interpretations of what they are being asked.

Because public school principals generally felt that *parts (b), (c),* and *(d)* did not apply to their situation, NCES might consider ignoring responses to these questions from public school respondents and focusing on responses from charter and/or private schools.

ITEM 4

THIS school year (2009-2010), does this school have any of the following?

a.   Community involvement activities for students during and after normal school hours

__   Yes   __   No

b.   Programs to acknowledge student achievement (e.g., assemblies, principal list/honor roll, or student of the week/month)

__   Yes   __   No

c.   An incentive/reward program that encourages students' academic success

__   Yes   __   No

d.   A program designed to help students prepare for educational transitions or college (e.g., elementary school to middle school, middle school to high school, or high school to college)

__   Yes   __   No

e.   Methods to inform parents or guardians of the students' progress

__   Yes   __   No

Findings

Part (a): All participants stated that their school participated in community involvement activities. Initially, one participant was not sure if this item was limited to activities that send students into the community. His school does not send students into the community, but community members can participate in an "After school academy." He eventually decided that the "After school academy" would count for this item. Other activities included:

Having community members speak to students on career day; and

Service learning and community service projects.

Parts (b) and *(c):* Most participants were able to easily distinguish between these two parts. Participants tended to associate *part (b)* with intangible rewards and *part (c)* with tangible rewards, e.g., cash, pizza or ice-cream parties, getting out of class early, and special field trips.

Part (d): Most participants were able to provide examples of programs designed to help students prepare for educational transitions to college. Most of these programs were orientation-type programs designed to prepare students for transitions between schools. In the majority of cases these were for transitions to the next school level, but some schools also indicated they had programs for incoming students, and at least two schools said they had programs for both incoming and graduating students.

Part (e): All participants immediately thought of report cards and progress reports as ways in which they informed parents or guardians of student progress. When probed for other modes of communication most participants also stated that they communicated with parents via phone, letters, and one-on-one meetings during parent-teacher conferences. A few participants mentioned e-mail, open houses, newsletters, and Parent Teacher Association meetings.

Only a few participants thought that adding examples would help clarify the question. Specifically, three of these participants thought that adding examples to *part (c)* would be helpful, and one participant thought adding examples to *part (a)* would be helpful.

Recommendations

Part (a): Provide examples of community service activities that would be included under this option.

Part (c): Provide examples of incentive/reward programs to reduce the potential that principals could misinterpret this item.

Part (e): If NCES does not want participants to consider report cards as methods of informing parents of their students' progress, this must be noted in the question. For example,
"Methods (other than report cards) to inform parents or guardians of the students' progress"

ITEM 5
LAST SCHOOL YEAR (2008-09), what percentage of students had at least one parent or guardian participating in the following events?

Mark (X) one box on each line.

	0–25 percent	26–50 percent	51–75 percent	76–100 percent	Not applicable
a. Open house or back-to-school night	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
b. All regularly scheduled school–wide parent-teacher conferences	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
c. Special subject-area events (e.g., science fair, concerts)	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
d. Parent education workshops or courses	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
e. Signing of a written contract between school and parent	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
f. Volunteer in the school on a regular basis	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
g. Involvement in instructional issues	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
h. Involvement in governance	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
i. Involvement in budget decisions	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏

Findings

Parts (a)–(c):

Participants did not have any difficulty understanding these parts or identifying the percentage of students with a participating parent.

About one-third of participants said they made an educated guess about what percentage to select, one-third said they were basing their decision based on what others (e.g., guidance counselors) told them, and one-third said they collected data on many of the indicators and so had a good idea of what percentage they should select.

Part (d): Participants did not have any difficulty understanding this part or identifying the percentage of students with a participating parent. Examples given of parent education workshops or courses included:

- workshops on helping children with homework;

- information sessions about college scholarships and applications; and

- classes/seminars on parenting.

Part (e): Participants had differing interpretations of this part.

One participant stated that he did not know what was meant by the phrase "written contract between school and parent."

Another participant said the item was ambiguous because he did not understand whether he should be thinking of a behavioral contract (a contract that parents and students sign when a student is having

trouble in school) or a parent compact (a nonbinding document which parents at his school have to sign at the beginning of the year). He later decided it was the latter and selected "76–100 percent."

Another participant had a similar confusion and was not sure if the question was intended to describe a behavioral contract or an IEP. He decided this question meant a behavioral contract and responded "Not applicable," as his school did not use behavioral contracts.

Other interpretations of the term "written contract between school and parent" included:

- an academic assistance plan;
- a plan outlining the goals for student success and what the parent will do to help achieve the goal; and
- a contract at the end of the student handbook that parents must read and sign indicating their agreement with school policies and their agreement to pay tuition.

Part (f): A few participants had some trouble answering this question because it was difficult for them to distinguish between these parents and those who volunteer only occasionally. One principal selected "Not applicable" for this item, saying that her school did not have regular parent volunteers because they ask for volunteers on an as-needed basis.

Part (g): Several participants had difficulty with the phrase "involvement in instructional issues."

One participant did not place a response on this line because she did not understand what it meant.

The other participants had very different interpretations of what they were asked to identify. These included, the percentage of all parents:

- who express concerns about the curriculum or the way a teacher grades;
- involved in back to school night (two participants interpreted *part (g)* in this way even though back-to-school night was already referenced in *part (a)*;
- who contact the school to advocate for their child;
- who help with the school improvement plan, or who serve on a committee to assess textbooks or decide school policy; and
- who have children with specially identified instructional needs;

Part (h): Most participants responded "0–25 percent" for this question. To better understand how participants interpreted the phrase "involvement in governance," they were asked to provide examples of how parents could be involved in governance. Participants' explanations included:

- Parents can serve on school improvement councils or boards that make governance decisions such as determining school policies.
- Parents can participate in booster clubs—parent groups that organize activities to support various school activities.

Part (i): Most participants responded "0–25 percent" for this question. To better understand how participants interpreted the phrase "involvement in budget decisions," they were asked to provide examples of how parents could be involved in budget decisions. Participants' explanations included:

- Parents can serve on school improvement councils, finance committees, booster clubs, or the parent association; and

- Parents can voice their budget concerns or ideas at board meetings.

Recommendations

Part (e): Clarify what is meant by the phrase "written contract between school and parent," whether it means a contract that is set up as part of a student behavioral intervention, an IEP, or a parent-school compact that is put in place for all parents.

Part (g): This question is very broad and interpreted in a variety of different ways. If the item is retained, a description should be provided of what is meant by "involvement in instructional issues."

Depending on the intent, consider clarifying *parts (h)* and *(i)*.

ITEM 6

On average throughout the school year, what percentage of time do you estimate that you spend on the following tasks in this school?
Rough estimates are sufficient.
Please write a percentage in each row. Write 0 if none.
Responses should add up to 100 percent

a.   __ __ __ percent   Internal administrative tasks (including human resource/personnel issues, regulations, reports, school budget)

b.   __ __ __ percent   Curriculum and teaching-related tasks (including teaching, lesson preparation, classroom observations, mentoring teachers)

c.   __ __ __ percent   Student and parent interactions

d.   __ __ __ percent   Responding to requests from district, state, or federal education officials

e.   __ __ __ percent   Representing the school at meetings or in the community and networking

f.   __ __ __ percent   Other → *Please specify* _____

100 percent Total

Findings

Participants generally spent a lot of time on this item because they repeatedly revised their estimates as they reflected on the percentage of time they spent on the listed activities. One participant decided not to answer this item as she thought it was "too complicated." Another participant commented that he hoped his responses would "not be taken too seriously," as he did not think his estimates were accurate.

All participants who answered this question provided answers that totaled to 100.

Participants were asked if they considered evening and weekend events when determining their percentages. While most participants stated that they did consider night and weekend events, a few stated that they limited their calculations to what they did during the school day.

Part (f): Activities that participants categorized as "other" were:

- Sporting events;

- Discipline;

- Personal professional development; and

- New initiatives (e.g., learning communities)

Recommendations

Consider specifying in the instructions whether principals should include time spent outside the regular school day.

Consider limiting the number of categories in this item to three or four in order to make it easier for respondents to allocate time between them. If possible, try to avoid categories that are likely to have very low time allocations.

Part (c): If the phrase "student interactions" is used, specify whether this category should include time spent on discipline.

Part (f): Consider restructuring the "Other" option by adding examples rather than having principals fill in additional activities.

"Other (e.g., attending afterschool activities; professional development; responding to requests from district, state, or federal education officials)"

ITEM 7

Do any of the following people or groups conduct formal evaluations in this school for teachers of grades K–12 or comparable ungraded levels?

a.   Principal

__   Yes

__   No

b.   Vice principal or assistant principal

__   Yes

__   No

c.   Teachers' peers

__   Yes

__   No

d.   Outside group (e.g., consultant)

__   Yes

__   No

Findings

Participants had a common understanding of the term "formal evaluation." They generally thought of these as evaluations that were based on specific indicators, with the findings documented in a teacher's personnel file.

Part (b): Several participants selected "No" because their school did not have a vice principal or assistant principal. They recommended adding a "Not applicable" option to distinguish between not having the vice principal evaluate, and not having a vice principal at the school.

Part (c): A few participants were not sure how to answer this question if their peers completed only a part of the formal evaluation, e.g., if they completed observations of a teacher and these were included in the principal's formal evaluation. Two participants answered "Yes" in this situation, while another answered "No."

Part (d): Outside groups that participants thought would fall into this category included school district staff, math and literacy coaches, and members of the school's accrediting body.

Almost half of the participants thought that school district staff should be added to the list. One private school principal also suggested including students.

Recommendations

Specify if the item is intended to capture information only on those who *submit* formal evaluations or if the intent is to also capture information on all those who *participate* in the formal evaluation process.

Part (b): If data are not collected elsewhere in the survey as to whether the school has a vice principal or assistant principal, consider including a "Not applicable" option.

Part (d): If other school personnel (such as math and literacy coaches) should not be considered when answering *part (d)*, either specify this or add "other school personnel" as a separate category.

Consider including school district personnel either as a separate category or include it as an example in *part (d)*: "Outside groups (e.g., consultant, school district personnel)."

ITEM 8

For tenured or experienced K–12 teachers, how frequently are formal evaluations conducted?

__   Twice or more per year

__   Once a year

__   Once every 2 years

__   Once every 3–4 years

__   Once every 5 or more years

__   Never

Findings

When answering this question, several participants did not distinguish between "formal evaluations" and "observations." These principals counted all the times they observed teachers even if these observations were not part of a formal evaluation.

In at least three cases, principals explicitly stated that there were no formal evaluations for experienced K–12 teachers, however, they did not select the "Never" option. One participant selected "Once every 5 or more years" because he included informal evaluations in his answer; one selected "Twice or more per year" because his tenured teachers receive what he called two "snapshot" observations per year; and the third participant selected "Twice or more per year" because he thought he and his school would "look bad" if he selected "Never."

Recommendations

Add the following (or similar) instruction for the item:
"Consider only FORMAL EVALUATIONS in your answer to this question. Do not consider informal evaluations or observations. If tenured or experienced K–12 teachers in your school do not receive formal evaluations, select 'Never.'"

Consider rephrasing the "Never" option, for example,
"No formal evaluations are required"

ITEM 9

For nontenured or new K–12 teachers, how frequently are formal evaluations conducted?

__　　　Twice or more per year

__　　　Once a year

__　　　Once every 2 years

__　　　Once every 3 or more years

__　　　Never

Findings

As in the previous item, several participants tended to have a hard time distinguishing between formal evaluations and observations. Most principals counted all the times they *observed* teachers even if these were not part of a formal evaluation.

Although no participants selected "Never" as a response to Item 9, most said that the "Never" option should be retained.

Recommendations

Add the following (or similar) instruction for the item:
"Consider only FORMAL EVALUATIONS in your answer to this question. Do not consider informal evaluations or observations. If tenured or experienced K–12 teachers in your school do not receive formal evaluations, select 'Never.'"

Consider rephrasing the "Never" option, for example,
"No formal evaluations are required"

ITEM 10

Did you answer "Never" to item 8 AND "Never" to item 9?

__　　　Yes → GO TO end of survey

__　　　No → GO TO item 11 below

Findings

All participants followed the skip pattern correctly.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 11

Are any of the following types of information included in the formal evaluation of regular classroom teachers of grades K–12 and comparable ungraded levels?

Evaluation by the principal

___   Yes

(1)   Which best describes the type of evaluation:

___   Checklist evaluation (Evaluation is based on satisfactory or unsatisfactory ratings of teacher competencies and behaviors.)

___   Standards-based evaluation (Evaluation is based on a certain standard that is established by district or school policymakers as being essential to effective teaching.)

___   Both

___   No → GO TO item 11b below

Evaluation by peers

___   Yes

(1)   Which best describes the type of evaluation:

___   Checklist evaluation (Evaluation is based on satisfactory or unsatisfactory ratings of teacher competencies and behaviors.)

___   Standards-based evaluation (Evaluation is based on a certain standard that is established by district or school policymakers as being essential to effective teaching.)

___   Both

_   No → GO TO item 11c below

Conference with the principal

___   Yes

___   No

Teacher self-evaluation

___   Yes

___   No

Students' test scores or test score growth

___   Yes

___   No

Student ratings of the teacher

___   Yes

___   No

Teacher's portfolio of examples of student learning (e.g., student essays, lab reports)

___   Yes

___   No

Completion of professional development activities

___   Yes

___   No

Other → *Please specify* _____

Findings

Parts (a) and *(b):* One participant was confused by the skip pattern in these questions. If the participant selects "No" the instructions are to "Go to *item 11b* below." As there is no instruction that indicates what the respondent should do if he/she answers "Yes," this participant assumed he should stop answering the entire item at this point. The participant had to be prompted by the interviewer to complete the rest of the item.

Parts (a) and *(b):* Participants generally understood that a "checklist evaluation" assesses whether specific competencies or behaviors are present. Some participants thought that for "standards-based evaluations" teachers were evaluated simply based on whether they were meeting a standard, while other participants thought that for this type of evaluation, the principal needed to document evidence of the extent to which the teacher was meeting each standard.

Part (b): Participants interpreted the word "peers" to be other classroom teachers. One participant explicitly limited this group to only certified teachers.

Part (e): One participant was not certain of how to respond to this item, because while student scores are considered as a part of other components of the evaluation, they "are not a separate category." He responded "No" to this question. Another participant uses students' AP test scores in the evaluation of AP teachers and in the evaluation of departments, but not in the evaluation of other individual teachers. He responded "Yes."

Parts (c), (d), (f), (g), and *(h):* Participants did not have any difficulty understanding these questions.

Part (i): Other types of information used for formal evaluations that participants thought should be included in the list were:

- evaluation by the Vice principal or Assistant principal; and
- evaluation by outside groups.

Participants were asked what types of teachers they *would not* consider "regular classroom teachers." Participants mentioned:

- longterm substitutes;
- health, physical education, media specialists, and guidance counselors; and
- administrators (although this principal said that in his school all administrators teach at least one class).

In answering this question participants considered all certified teachers—including special education, resource, and part-time teachers—to be "regular classroom teachers."

Recommendations

Include "Evaluations by the assistant or vice principal" in the list.

Because teachers within the same school may be evaluated differently, consider adding an instruction for principals to respond "Yes" if any of the items in the list apply to evaluations of any regular classroom teacher.

ITEM 12

How many classroom observations are typically conducted prior to completing an evaluation on a teacher of grades K–12 or comparable ungraded levels?
If none, please mark (X) the box.

☐   None or __ __ Total observations

Findings

Participants had very different understandings of how to answer this question:

- Most participants thought they should only include formal observations, but a few thought they should include both formal and informal observations.

Some participants provided the typical number of observations for new or struggling teachers, while others provided an average number of observations for evaluations of all teachers (including new or struggling).

Some participants provided the maximum number of observations ever used for an evaluation, while others responded with an average number of observations.

Recommendations

Specify whether principals are to consider formal and/or informal observations.

Specify whether principals are to consider the number of observations conducted for formal and/or informal evaluations.

Specify whether principals are to consider the number of observations conducted for new/nontenured vs. tenured teachers.

ITEM 13

How long is the typical classroom observation that occurs prior to completing an evaluation on a teacher of grades K–12 or comparable ungraded levels?
If none, please mark (X) the box.

☐   None or __ __ __ Minutes per classroom observation

Findings

Most participants said that the length of an observation could vary significantly depending on whether it was a formal or informal evaluation, and also depending on whether the teacher was new, underperforming, or experienced. In most cases, participants provided the maximum length of an observation.

Most participants thought they should only include formal observations, but a few thought they should include both formal and informal observations.

One participant incorrectly totaled the multiple observations she did for a teacher and recorded a response of 180 minutes (based on three 60-minute observations).

Recommendations

Specify whether principals are to consider formal and/or informal observations, and whether they are to consider formal and/or informal evaluations.

When analyzing response data, NCES should be aware that respondents may not be providing the "typical" length of an observation, but something closer to the maximum length. If that is a problem, NCES should consider clarifying that in the question.

ITEM 14

Are teachers' evaluations used, at least in part, to determine a teacher's compensation?

__   Yes

__   No

Findings

One participant was unclear as to whether this question was limited to only financial compensation. She does offer nonfinancial incentives to teachers with a good evaluation such as leaving early, but she eventually decided the item referred only to financial compensation and responded "No" to this question.

Another participant stated that at her school, compensation is indirectly tied to evaluations because teachers who receive a poor evaluation may be denied a "step" on the salary scale. She responded "No" to this question.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item, unless NCES wants participants to respond "Yes" if teachers can be denied a step on the salary scale based on their evaluations.

Findings from the Revised Items

Item 1a

How frequently are informal classroom observations typically conducted on tenured or experienced teachers of grades K–12 or comparable ungraded levels?

Mark (X) only one box.

__   At least once a week
__   Once or twice a month
__   A few times a year
__   No informal observations are typically conducted

Item 1b

How frequently are informal classroom observations typically conducted on nontenured or new teachers of grades K–12 or comparable ungraded levels?

Mark (X) only one box.

__   At least once a week
__   Once or twice a month
__   A few times a year
__   No informal observations are typically conducted

Findings

Most participants did not have any difficult responding to these items. However, one participant did not initially see the word "informal" in the question. After reading Item 2a (the next item), she went back and re-read Item 1a more closely and realized her mistake. She then changed her answers to Items 1a and 1b.

Three participants commented that several different response options might be correct, depending on other circumstances (e.g., whether a teacher is struggling). Two participants picked the response option corresponding to the highest number of observations that might take place; the other participant selected the lowest number of observations that would take place.

One participant was unsure whether to include "walk-throughs," and thought the item should specify whether these should be counted as "informal observations."

Half of the participants indicated in their responses that informal observations are carried out more frequently with nontenured teachers. The remaining half indicated that the frequency of observations was the same for tenured and nontenured teachers.

Two participants specifically commented that it was a good idea to ask about tenured and nontenured teachers separately because the frequency of observations often varies between the two groups.

None of the participants selected the response option "No informal observations are typically conducted" for either Items 1a or 1b. Participants commented that the response option was appropriate to include and easy to understand.

Recommendations

To emphasize the difference between these items and other items, put "informal" in all capital letters.

To emphasize the difference between Items 1a and 1b, underline the phrase "tenured or experienced" in Item 1a and "nontenured or new" in Item 1b.

Item 2a

How many formal classroom observations are typically conducted prior to completing an evaluation on a tenured or experienced teacher of grades K–12 or comparable ungraded levels?

If none, please mark (X) the box.

__   None **or** __ __   Total observations

Item 2b

How many formal classroom observations are typically conducted prior to completing an evaluation on a nontenured or new teacher of grades K–12 or comparable ungraded levels?

If none, please mark (X) the box.

__   None **or**__ __   Total observations

Findings

Participants did not have any difficulty responding to these items.

Two participants commented that the number of observations conducted might vary depending on the circumstances (e.g., whether a teacher is struggling). Of these two, one provided the upper end of the range in her responses to Items 2a and 2b; the other provided the lower end of the range.

Four of the six respondents gave a higher response for Item 2b than for Item 2a, indicating that more formal observations are conducted prior to completing an evaluation on a nontenured teacher compared to a tenured teacher. The remaining participants indicated the number of observations was the same for tenured and nontenured teachers.

None of the participants selected "None" for either of Items 2a or 2b, but all felt it was appropriate to include as a response option.

Recommendations

To emphasize the difference between these items and other items, put "formal" in all capital letters.

To emphasize the difference between Items 2a and 2b, underline the phrase "tenured or experienced" in Item 2a and "nontenured or new" in Item 2b.

Item 3a

How long is the typical formal classroom observation that occurs prior to completing an evaluation on a tenured or experienced teacher of grades K–12 or comparable ungraded levels?

If none, please mark (X) the box.

__   None **or** __ __ __   Minutes per classroom observation

Item 3b

How long is the typical formal classroom observation that occurs prior to completing an evaluation on a nontenured or new teacher of grades K–12 or comparable ungraded levels?

If none, please mark (X) the box.

__   None **or** __ __ __   Minutes per classroom observation

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Findings

Participants did not have any difficulty responding to these items.

Two of the six participants provided higher answers for Item 3b than for Item 3a, indicating that observations were generally longer for nontenured teachers compared to tenured teachers. The other four participants' response to Items 3a and 3b were the same.

Three of the participants indicated that observations might have a range of durations. For example, one participant said that observations for both tenured and nontenured teachers could last between five and 30 minutes. The other three participants indicated that the length of an observation was always consistent.

Of the three participants who indicated that the length of an observation could vary, two provided an answer that represented the "average" length of an observation. The other participant provided the lower end of the range as her response, but verbally added that "some observations might be longer."

Recommendations

To emphasize the difference between these items and other items, put "formal" in all capital letters.

To emphasize the difference between Items 3a and 3b, underline the phrase "tenured or experienced" in Item 3a and "nontenured or new" in Item 3b.

Item 4

How frequently are tenured or experienced teachers rated in FORMAL evaluations?

Consider only formal evaluations in your answer to this question, not informal evaluations or number of times observations are conducted. If tenured or experienced K–12 teachers in your school do not receive formal evaluations, select "No formal evaluations are required."

Mark (X) only one box.

__   Twice or more per year
__   Once a year
__   Once every 2 years
__   Once every 3–4 years
__   Once every 5 or more years
__   No formal evaluations are required

Item 5

How frequently are nontenured or new teachers rated in FORMAL evaluations?

Consider only formal evaluations in your answer to this question, not informal evaluations or number of times observations are conducted. If nontenured or new K–12 teachers in your school do not receive formal evaluations, select "No formal evaluations are required."

Mark (X) only one box.

__   Twice or more per year
__   Once a year
__   Once every 2 years
__   Once every 3–4 years
__   Once every 5 or more years
__   No formal evaluations are required

Findings

Participants did not have any difficulty responding to these items.

One participant said that she did not believe there was a difference between formal observations and formal evaluations. She indicated that teachers at her school are evaluated five times per year.

Three of the six participants provided different answers for Items 4 and 5. In all three cases, they indicated that nontenured teachers were rated more frequently in formal evaluations compared to tenured teachers. The remaining three participants provided the same answer for Items 4 and 5.

When answering Item 4, one participant indicated that there is no requirement to observe tenured teachers unless a teacher is struggling. This participant selected "once every 5 or more years."

Recommendations

To emphasize the difference between Items 4 and 5, underline the phrase "tenured or experienced" in Item 4 and "nontenured or new" in Item 5.

To maintain consistency with the first three sets of items, label these items using "a" and "b" (e.g., items 4a and 4b) rather than giving them different item numbers.

Testing of Items for the Teacher Questionnaire

Description of Participants

ICF Macro recruited teachers who represented every grade level in K–12, many geographic regions, and a wide range of experience. Some participants came from charter or private schools, as well as traditional public schools. All participants held a bachelor's degree, and most also had a master's degree. There were four participants with National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification. Teachers came from:

- California;
- Georgia;
- Kansas;
- Maryland;
- New Hampshire;
- New York;
- Pennsylvania;
- Tennessee;
- Virginia; and
- Washington.

Summary of Findings

The following section summarizes the results of the interviews testing items for the Teacher Questionnaire. Under each item tested, we describe key findings as well as recommendations.

ITEM 1

In what year did you FIRST begin teaching, either full-time or part-time, at the elementary or secondary level?
* Do not include time spent as a student teacher.
__ __ __ __ Year

Findings

All but two participants had no difficulty responding to this item.

One teacher was unsure which year to count as his first because he began teaching as an unlicensed teacher. He counted his year as an unlicensed teacher as the year in which he began teaching.

Another teacher was unsure which year to count as her first because she began teaching in another country. She counted her first year teaching abroad as her first year teaching.

One teacher started as a Pre-K teacher, but the year she reported for this item was when she began teaching at the elementary level.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 2

In what year did you begin teaching in THIS school?
* *If you have had a break in service of one year or more, please report the year that you returned to this school.*
* *Do not include time spent as a student teacher.*
__ __ __ __ Year

Findings

This item was difficult for several participants:

- Several participants were not sure whether "THIS school" meant the school in which they were currently teaching or the school referred to in *Item 1* (first year of teaching). (This may have been an artifact of testing resulting from the order in which items were shown to participants.)

Of four participants who reported breaks in service, at least two incorrectly provided the year they first came to the school, not the year they returned after their break.

One participant is an ESL teacher who teaches in multiple schools at the same time. She was not sure how to respond to this item, so she picked one of the schools she teaches in and responded for that school.

Participants were asked to respond to the following hypothetical situation: "Image that you had started teaching at this school in the year 2000. You taught in the school until 2007, then took a year off and returned in 2009. How would you answer this item?" Nine of the 16 participants correctly answered "2009." Five incorrectly answered "2000," one said "2007," and one did not know how to respond to the question.

Several participants asked whether the "break in service of one year or more" referred to a school or calendar year. All of them interpreted it as a school year.

Recommendations

To avoid different interpretations of a "break in service of one year or more," consider specifying whether it is a calendar year or a school year.

If teachers who work in multiple schools will be answering this question, consider adding an instruction specifying how they should respond to this item.

In the instruction about breaks in service, revise the bolding of text to emphasize what should be reported: "If you have had a break in service of one year or more, please report **the year that you returned** to this school."

ITEM 3

In how many schools have you taught at the elementary or secondary level?
* *Do not include time spent as a student teacher.*
__ __ Schools

Findings

Most participants had no difficulty responding to this item.

One participant started in one school, transferred to another school, and then returned to the first school. She did not double-count the first school, and reported teaching in two schools.

Two participants indicated they had some trouble responding to this item:

- One participant only included schools he taught in during the school year, and did not include other schools where he taught only during the summer.

- Another participant estimated the number of schools she taught in (20) because she teaches in multiple schools at the same time. Over the course of her career, she has taught in so many schools that she could only estimate her response.

Recommendations

Depending on the intent of the question, consider adding an instruction specifying how teachers who work in multiple schools each year should answer this item.

ITEM 4

How many school years have you worked as an elementary- or secondary-level teacher in a public or private school?
* Include the current school year.
*Public schools include public charter and/or Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools.
* If you worked in more than one school in a given school year, count that school year only once.
* Do not include time spent as a student teacher.
* Record whole years, not fractions or months.

__ __ School Years

Findings

Several participants said there were too many italicized instructions, and a few indicated they did not read the italicized instructions at all because there were so many.

This was especially problematic for one participant who did not include the 2 years she taught in a charter school because "charter" was not in the question stem and she did not read the italicized instructions.

Two teachers had "half years" (11.5 and 21.5); one rounded down while the other rounded up.

One participant included a year of maternity leave because she was still a paid employee.

One participant suggested that the item should ask how many years the respondent has worked "in public or private schools," rather than "in a public or private school."

Recommendations

Change the wording of the question from "in a public or private school" to "in public or private schools."

To increase accuracy among those who will not read all of the italicized instructions, consider rewording the question stem as: **"How many school years have you worked as an elementary- or secondary-level teacher in public or private schools (including charter and/or Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools)?"**

To reduce the number of italicized instructions, consider removing the second and third instructions.

These changes are also recommended for *Items 5* and *6*.

ITEM 5

Of the school years you have worked as an elementary- or secondary-level teacher in public or private schools, how many were—
* Include the current school year.
* Public schools include public charter and/or Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools.
* Do not include time spent as a student teacher.
* Record whole years, not fractions or months.
* If none, please mark (X) the box.

a.   In public and private schools during the SAME school year?

None or __ __ School Years

b.   In public schools only?

None or __ __ School Years

c.   In private schools only?

None or __ __ School Years

Findings

As with the previous item, several participants said there were too many italicized instructions, and a few indicated that they did not read any of the italicized instructions at all because there were so many.

This was especially problematic for one participant who did not include the 2 years she taught in a charter school because "charter" was not in the question stem and she did not read the italicized instructions.

Recommendations

To increase accuracy among those who will not read all of the italicized instructions, consider rewording the question stem as: "Of the school years you have worked as an elementary- or secondary-level teacher in a public or private school (including charter and/or Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools), how many were—" This would also allow for the removal of the second instruction.

ITEM 6

How many years have you worked FULL-TIME and/or PART-TIME as an elementary- or secondary-level teacher in public or private schools?
* *Include the current school year.*
* *Public Schools include public charter and/or Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools.*
* *Do not include time spent as a student teacher.*
* *Record whole years, not fractions or months.*
* *If none, please mark (X) the box.*

a.   How many years have you taught FULL-TIME—

(1)   In PUBLIC schools?

None or __ __ Years

(2)   In PRIVATE schools?

None or __ __ Years

b.   How many years have you taught PART-TIME—

(1)   In PUBLIC schools?

None or __ __ Years

(2)   In PRIVATE schools?

None or __ __ Years

Findings

Most respondents were able to answer this item accurately.

As with the previous items, several participants said there were too many italicized instructions, and a few of these participants indicated that they did not read any of the italicized instructions at all because there were so many.

This was especially problematic for one participant who did not include the two years she taught in a charter school because "charter" was not in the question stem and she did not read the italicized instructions.

A number of participants were confused by *Item 6*, and initially thought that the item was redundant with *Items 4* and *5*. After looking at the items more closely all realized that *Item 6* asked for different information than earlier items. However, several suggested that *Item 5* and *Item 6* could be combined into a single item.

One participant suggested that *Item 6* refer to "school years" to maintain consistency with previous items.

Teachers defined part time in different ways, depending on what was applicable at their school or district. These definitions included: hours (less than 35 or 40 per week, less than 8 per day), full days (fewer than 3 full days per week), classes or sections (less than 3, 5, or 6 per day), FTE (less than 0.6 or 1.0), or working half time (in a district where the only options are half- or full-time).

Recommendations

Consider using skip patterns so that participants are only asked the relevant portions of Item 6, depending on their responses to *Item 5*.

To increase accuracy among those who will not read all of the italicized instructions, consider rewording the question stem as: **"How many years have you worked FULL-TIME and/or PART-TIME as an elementary- or secondary-level teacher in a public or private school (including charter and/or Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools)?"** This would also allow for the removal of the second instruction.

To maintain consistency between *Items 4, 5*, and *6*, consider changing "years" to "school years."

ITEM 7

Do you instruct the same group or a portion of a group of students for more than one year (e.g., looping)?

__   Yes

__   No

Findings

About half of the participants understood the correct meaning of the term "looping." The other half misunderstood the term to mean teaching one or more students for two consecutive years (for example, if a student happened to have the same teacher for 9th and 10th grade math). Participants' responses were consistent with their interpretation of the item.

Recommendations

Revise the item as: **"Do you instruct the same group of students for more than one year (e.g., looping)?"**

ITEM 8

How many separate class periods or sections do you currently teach at THIS school?
* Do not include homeroom periods or study halls.
(Example: If you teach 2 classes or sections of chemistry I, a class or section of physics I, and a class or section of physics II, you would report 04 classes or sections.)

__ __ Number of classes or sections → If 0, GO TO Item 10

Findings

This item was not problematic for departmentalized teachers.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 9

For EACH class period or section that you reported in item 8, record the subject name, subject matter code, grade level code, number of students, and student achievement level.
* *MIXED GRADES: List the grade with the most number of students.*
* *The number of lines filled out should equal the number of class periods or sections reported in item 8.*
* *Record one of the teaching assignment and subject matter codes from Table 1 and use the grade level codes below.*

A. Subject Name	B. Subject Matter Code	C. Grade level Code	D. Number of Students	E. Student achievement level *Mark (X) only one box*		
				Primarily higher achieving	Primarily lower achieving	Widely differing achievement levels
Ex. English	1 5 3	11	33	❑	❑	❑
	— — —	— —	— —	❑	❑	❑
	— — —	— —	— —	❑	❑	❑
	— — —	— —	— —	❑	❑	❑

Findings

Most participants did not have any difficulty responding to this item.

When asked how they defined "student achievement levels," teachers considered the following things: tracking (e.g., whether students were in "honors" or "remedial" courses), student grades, scores on standardized and classroom assessments, subjective assessment of student abilities, and/or subjective assessment of student attitudes and effort.

Recommendations

Depending on the intent of the question, clarify what is meant by "student achievement level" in *part (e)*. If this part of the question is not clarified, the resultant data will likely not be meaningful.

ITEM 10

Was your FIRST year of teaching before the 2007-08 school year?
__   Yes→ GO TO Item 12
__   No

Findings

No participants had difficulty with this item.

Twelve of the 16 participants responded "Yes."

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 11a

How many graduate or undergraduate courses focused on teaching methods or teaching strategies have you taken?

__   None → GO TO Item 12

__   1 or 2 courses

__   3 or 4 courses

__   5 to 9 courses

__   10 or more courses

Findings

Most participants who responded to this item did not have any difficulty.

One participant included a class she was *currently* taking in her answer.

One participant was not sure how to respond because all of her classes included content on teaching methods or strategies, but not all of her classes focused on methods and strategies. She decided to count all courses that included any content on teaching methods or strategies, and responded "10 or more courses."

Recommendations

Depending on the intent of the question, consider specifying whether participants should count courses they are *currently* taking.

Depending on the intent of the question, consider specifying whether participants should count courses that covered this content at all, or only those that specifically focused on each content area.

ITEM 11b

Were any of these courses in the following areas?

Methods of delivering lessons

__   Yes

__   No

Student learning styles

__   Yes

__   No

Teaching students with special needs

__   Yes

__   No

Multiculturalism/teaching diverse student

__   Yes

__   No

Engaging gifted and talented students

__   Yes

__   No

Assessing student learning

__   Yes

__   No

Subject-specific teaching methods

__   Yes

__   No

Other courses

__   Yes → *Please specify* _____

__   No

Findings

Participants did not have any difficulty responding to this item. However, most said that most of their classes touched on all of the areas described; 5 of the 6 participants who responded to this item said "Yes" to all eight parts of the question. The only participant who did not respond "Yes" to all parts was a teacher who had recently started taking coursework to get certification. She said "No" to (1) methods of delivering lessons, (5) engaging gifted and talented students, and (7) subject-specific teaching methods.

Responses to the *part (8)* "other courses" included: teaching with technology, curriculum development, classroom management, classroom and behavior management, educational psychology, fundamentals of education, instructional technology, teaching with technology, and educational administration.

Several teachers mentioned "instructional technology" and "classroom management" as content areas that should be included in the list.

Recommendations

Consider adding "instructional technology" and "classroom management" as content areas.

Depending on the intent of the question, consider specifying whether participants should count courses that touched on this content at all, or only those that specifically focused on each content area. Based on findings from these interviews, it appears that if no changes are made to the item the percentage of "Yes" answers will be extremely high.

ITEM 12

In your FIRST year of teaching, how well prepared were you to—
* If you are in your first year of teaching, please answer for THIS school year.
* Mark (X) one box on each line.

	Not at all prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared
a. Handle a range of classroom management or discipline situations?	❑	❑	❑	❑
b. Use a variety of instructional methods?	❑	❑	❑	❑
c. Teach your subject matter?	❑	❑	❑	❑
d. Use computers in classroom instruction?	❑	❑	❑	❑
e. Assess students?	❑	❑	❑	❑
f. Differentiate instruction in the classroom?	❑	❑	❑	❑
g. Use data from student assessments to inform instruction?	❑	❑	❑	❑
h. Meet state content standards?	❑	❑	❑	❑

Findings

Most participants did not have any difficulty responding to this item.

Part (d): Five teachers who had been teaching for at least 16 years indicated that they were "not at all prepared" to use computers in classroom instruction because computers were not yet in use when they began teaching.

Part (f): When asked to define "differentiate instruction" in their own words, participants gave responses that included one or both of the following:

- adjusting lesson content based on students' knowledge and abilities; and

- adjusting teaching style based on students' learning style preferences.

Part (g): Respondents defined "using student data to inform instruction" as using results from formal and/or informal assessments to develop lessons and "next steps" based on students' needs. Respondents indicated that they might consider a number of different types of assessments, from class assignments and discussions to standardized test scores.

Part (h): Respondents did not have any difficulty with this part of the item. Some respondents were initially confused by what it meant to "meet state content standards," but this did not seem to cause them any trouble in answering.

One teacher who had taught in both public and private schools said it was possible that private school teachers may not know what state content standards are. This was confirmed by one private school teacher who said she did not know what the state content standards were, but she selected the "very well prepared" option because she was sure she would be able to meet them.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 13

Are you certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in at least one content area?

(The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is a nongovernment organization that administers National Board certification, a voluntary national assessment program that certifies teachers who meet high professional standards. In order to gain certification, the candidate must at least complete a portfolio of classroom practice and pass one or more tests of content knowledge.)

__   Yes, fully certified→GO TO item 14 below

__   No → GO TO item 15a

Findings

Two of the 11 participants who responded to this item indicated that they had never heard of NBPTS.

Five participants indicated that they had NBPTS certification.

One participant responded "Yes," but did not actually have NBPTS certification. She received her initial certification in another country, and referred to her certification in the United States as NBPTS certification in this item and *Item 14*.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 14

Using Table 2, in what content area(s) does the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification allow you to teach?

Subject Name	Code
	__ __ __ Code
	__ __ __ Code
	__ __ __ Code

Findings

The four participants that had NBPTS certification did not have any difficulty responding to this item.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 15a[1]

Which of the following describes the teaching certificate you currently hold in THIS state or that is accepted by THIS state?
* *Mark (X) only one box.*
* *If you currently hold more than one of the following, a second certification may be listed in item 16.*

__   Regular or standard state certificate or advanced professional certificate

__   Certificate issued after satisfying all requirements except the completion of a probationary period

__   Certificate that requires some additional coursework, student teaching, or passage of a test before regular certification can be obtained

__   Certificate issued to persons who must complete a certification program in order to continue teaching

__   I do not hold any of the above certifications in THIS state→ GO TO item 17.

Findings

Most participants did not have any difficulty responding to this item.

Most participants initially ignored the phrase "or that is accepted by THIS state." When asked what this phrase meant, most were unsure and said they found it to be confusing.

Some participants were unsure how to respond to this item because the first response option reflected the current status of their certificate, but one of the other options was true in the past. For example, one noted that her certificate had initially required some additional coursework, but she had since completed that coursework. All of these participants selected the first response option.

Recommendations

Consider rephrasing the question in a simpler way; for example, **"Which of the following currently describes the teaching certificate that allows you to teach in this state?"**

---

[1] These findings and recommendations also apply to Item 16b, which is very similar.

ITEM 15 and 16

b.   Using Table 2, in what content area(s) and grade range(s) does the teaching certificate marked above allow you to teach in THIS state?

(For some teachers, the content area may be the grade level, for example, elementary general, secondary general, etc.)

* If this certificate allows you to teach in more than one content area, you may report additional content areas in later items.

Content Area	Content Code	Grade Range (check all that apply)		
		Early childhood, preschool, and any of grades K–5	Any of grades 6–8	Any of grades 9–12
	— — —			

c.   Does this certificate marked in item 15a allow you to teach in additional content areas?

__   Yes

__   No → GO TO item 16a

d.   Using Table 2, please record the ADDITIONAL content area and grade range:

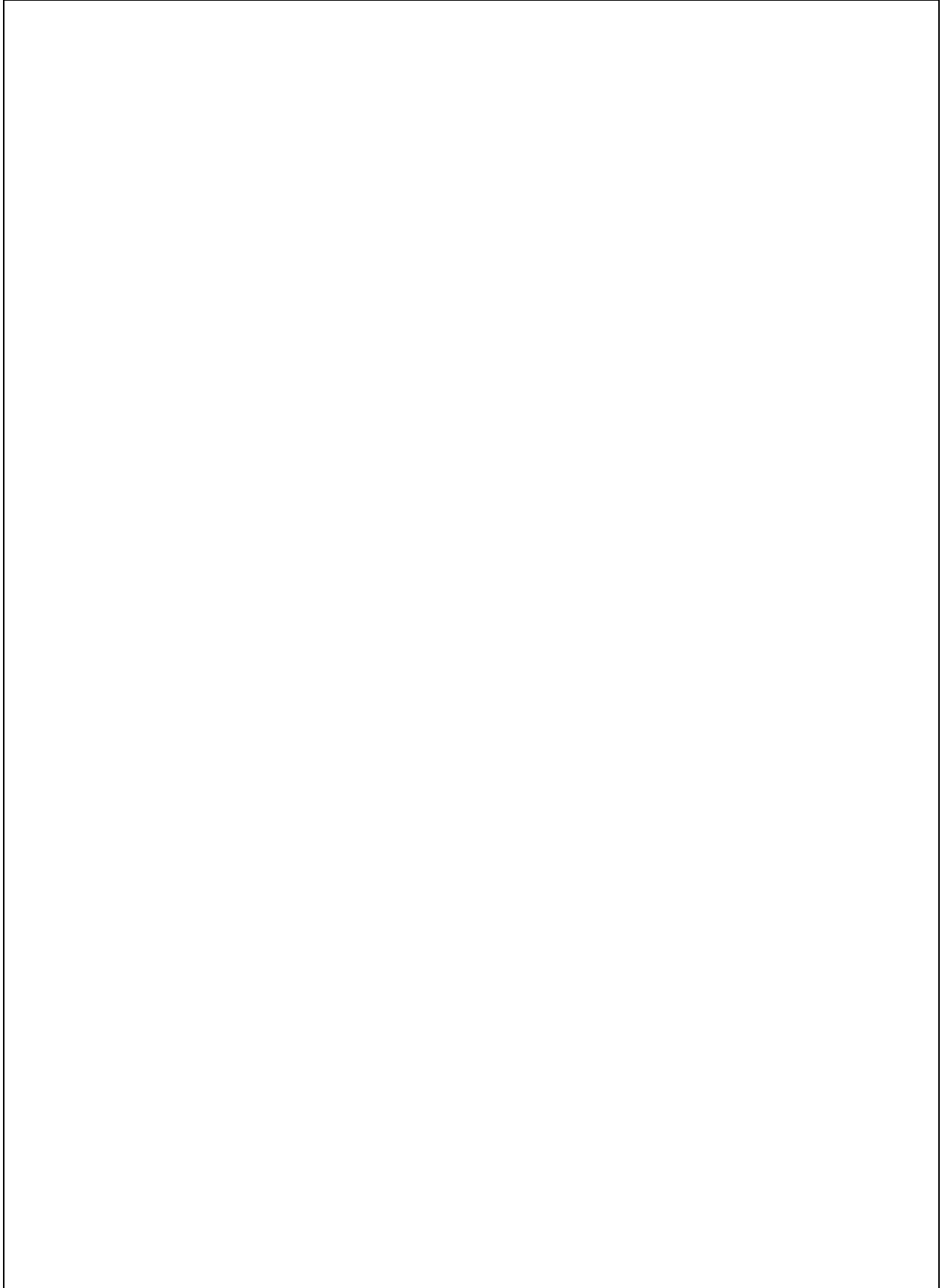| Additional Content Area	Content Code	Grade Range (check all that apply)		
		Early childhood, preschool, and any of grades K–5	Any of grades 6–8	Any of grades 9–12
1.	— — —			

e.   Does this certificate marked in item 15a allow you to teach in additional content areas?

__   Yes

__   No → GO TO item 16a

f. Using Table 2, please record the ADDITIONAL content area and grade range:

Additional Content Area	Content Code	Grade Range (check all that apply)		
		Early childhood, preschool, and any of grades K–5	Any of grades 6–8	Any of grades 9–12
2.	— — —			

g. Does this certificate marked in item 15a allow you to teach in additional content areas?

__   Yes

__   No → GO TO item 16a

h. Using Table 2, please record the ADDITIONAL content area and grade range:

Additional Content Area	Content Code	Grade Range (check all that apply)		
		Early childhood, preschool, and any of grades K–5	Any of grades 6–8	Any of grades 9–12
3.	— — —			

i. Does this certificate marked in item 15a allow you to teach in additional content areas?

__   Yes

__   No → GO TO item 16a

j. Using Table 2, please record the ADDITIONAL content area and grade range:

Additional Content Area	Content Code	Grade Range (check all that apply)		
		Early childhood, preschool, and any of grades K–5	Any of grades 6–8	Any of grades 9–12
4.	— — —			

Findings

Several participants appeared overwhelmed when they first encountered this set of items because they seemed very complicated. While most were able to figure the question out and answer correctly, several encountered problems:

One participant mistakenly used Table 1 instead of Table 2 when selecting content codes.

One participant was certified to teach history. However, she entered this as two different content codes: "Social studies, general" and then "History."

One math teacher entered 102 (the code for "general education") in the space for "Content Area," and 190 (the code for "mathematics") in the space for "Content Code."

One participant indicated that her certificate allowed her to teach all of the content areas listed under English and Language arts in Table 2. This participant listed all of these as "additional content areas" in *parts (d), (f), (h),* and *(j)*, and then wrote the rest in at the bottom of the page.

One participant that was certified to teach several content areas said that the item was too complicated, and indicated that she would leave it blank.

A number of participants had difficulty responding to the "Grade Range" section of this item if their certification did not match the grade ranges provided. For example:

Two teachers who were certified to teach grades 7 and 8 but not grade 6 did not check the box for "Any of grades 6–8," because they did not think they could check that box unless all of the grades applied.

One participant who was certified to teach grades 4 and 5 but not K-3 checked the first content area box, but wrote "Only grades 4 and 5" in the margin.

Instead of marking two different grade levels under *part (b)*, one participant answered "Yes" to *part (c)* and then provided the same content code and a second grade range under *part (d)*.

One participant listed three content areas in which she was certified. However, she only provided grade ranges for the first content area; for the other two she left the grade range boxes blank.

Recommendations

Consider simplifying this question by deleting *parts (e)* through *(j)* and allowing respondents to list more than content area in *part (d)*.

Provide a full example of how the item should be completed. Illustrate in this example how grade ranges should be reported if respondents are certified to teach some, but not all, of the grades in a given range.

ITEM 16a

Do you have another current teaching certificate in THIS state or that is accepted by THIS state?

__   Yes

__   No➔GO TO item 17

Findings

Most participants responded "No" to *Item 16a*. Of those that responded "Yes," most did so incorrectly:

One person responded "Yes" but actually had only one certificate that covered two content areas, which she had reported in *Item 15*.

One respondent considered NBPTS certification to be "another teaching certificate" and selected "Yes." Other participants with NBPTS certification selected "No" for this item.

One participant had initially been certified in Connecticut, but then moved to New York and became certified there. Because her certification in Connecticut would still be valid (although not in New York), she responded "Yes" to *Item 16a*.

Two participants were working toward a second certificate, but still had to do something else for the certification to be accepted by the state (e.g., complete coursework or pass an exam). One responded "Yes" to this item because her situation fell under one of the response options in *Item 15*. The other responded "No" because the certificate was not currently accepted "as is."

Recommendations

Consider rephrasing the question, for example, **"Do you have another current teaching certificate under which you can teach in this state?"**

Alternatively, add an instruction indicating how respondents should answer if they are working toward a second certificate but have not yet completed the requirements.

ITEM 17

How often are you formally evaluated?
*Consider only FORMAL EVALUATIONS in your answer to this question, not informal evaluations or observations.

	Twice or more times per year
	Once a year
	Once every 2 years
	Once every 3-4 years
	Once every 5 or more years
	No formal evaluations are required

Findings

Participants defined "formal evaluations" in a consistent manner, including a formal observation by an administrator, feedback, and a report of some kind that goes in the teachers' record.

None of the participants selected "no formal evaluations are required"; most responded "once a year" or "twice or more times per year."

One participant responded "once a year," even though she is not ever formally evaluated. When asked why she responded this way, the participant explained that her school was very small and there was not enough time for the principal to formally evaluate all of the teachers. However, the teachers are evaluated informally, and she felt that should be reflected on the survey.

One participant responded "twice or more times per year" because this was the "ideal," but said that in most cases formal evaluations only take place once a year.

Recommendations

In order to improve accuracy, consider adding a similar item asking participants to report how often they are informally evaluated.

ITEM 18

DURING THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR, do you, or will you, earn any additional compensation from this school system for extracurricular or additional activities such as coaching, student activity sponsorship, or teaching evening classes?
* Report amounts in whole dollars.*

__   Yes → **How much?**
Record amount, then GO TO item 19 below.
$__ __,__ __ __.00
__   No

Findings

Most participants did not have any difficulties with this item, and those who reported receiving extra money did not have any difficulty providing an amount.

One participant did not know whether to include money received for activities during the summer, because the item refers to the current school year. She decided not to include money for these activities.

Another participant did not know whether to report money earned for participating in professional development; she eventually decided not to do so.

Teachers reported earning compensation for the following activities:

- Covering detention and remediation;
- Coaching/mentoring other teachers;
- Serving as a department chair;
- Tutoring students; and
- Proctoring tests.

Recommendations

Because coaching/mentoring other teachers is a relatively common activity, consider adding it to the examples provided.

ITEM 19

DURING THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR, do you, or will you, earn any additional compensation from this school system based on your students' performance (e.g., through a merit pay or pay-for-performance agreement)?
* Report amounts in whole dollars.*

__   Yes → **How much?**
Record amount, then GO TO item 20 below.
$__ __,__ __ __.00
__   No

Findings

No participants had any difficulty with this item. All participants selected "No."

The terms "merit pay" and "pay for performance" were not typically used in participants' schools, however, the teachers did not have any trouble understanding this question.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 20

DURING THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR, have you earned income from any OTHER sources from this school system, such as a state supplement, etc.?
* *Do not report any earnings already reported.*
* *Report amounts in whole dollars.*

__   Yes → **How much?**
Record amount, then GO TO item 21 below.
$__ __,__ __ __.00
__   No

Findings

Most participants did not have any difficulties with this item.

Those teachers who reported receiving extra money did not have any difficulty providing an amount.

One participant did not know where to report "summer activities" because the item refers to the current school year. Another participant did not know where to report professional development. Neither participant reported money received from these activities in any item.

The following activities were counted for this item:

Stipend for NBPTS certification

Coaching/mentoring other teachers

Judging an academic tournament

Grant to travel and learn about American History

One teacher who counted NBPTS certification gave the total money she receives, although she later indicated that the district and state share the cost.

One teacher indicated that she earns money from a different school system, for teaching night school. She did not include that money in her answer to this item, because the money didn't come from "this school system."

Recommendations

Assuming that the responses described above reflect the intent of the question, no modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 21

During the CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR do you, or will you, receive a retirement pension check paid from a teacher retirement system?
* Report amount in whole dollars.
__   Yes → **How much?**
Record amount.
$__ __,__ __ __.00
__   No

Findings

No teachers were receiving a pension, and no teachers had any difficulty with this item.

It was clear to participants that the item is asking about money received from and not put into the pension system.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 22a

Do you have a master's degree?
__   Yes → GO TO item 22b below
__   No→ End of survey

Findings

Participants did not have any difficulties with this item.

Recommendations

No modifications are recommended for this item.

ITEM 22b

Was at least a portion of the cost of your master's degree paid for by a school or school district in which you taught?
__   Yes
__   No

Findings

Most participants did not have any difficulty with this item. However, one participant selected "Yes," even though the cost was paid by the state.

When asked how they would answer if they had more than one master's degree and the school or district had paid for a portion of the cost of one of the two degrees, all participants said they would answer "Yes."

Recommendations

Revise question as follows: "Was at least a portion of the cost of your master's degree paid for by a school, school district, or state in which you taught?"

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Appendix H. Cognitive Testing of Schools and Staffing Survey Items Summary of Findings and Recommendations, May 2011

This appendix contains a report prepared by ICF Macro. Its contents are listed below.

Introduction

In April 2011, the Census Bureau contracted with ICF Macro, a research and evaluation company headquartered in Calverton, Maryland, to plan and carry out a series of cognitive interviews with teachers and principals. The purpose of these interviews was to gather feedback on proposed questions for the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), a national educational survey that is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Census Bureau. This report is a summary of the feedback that ICF Macro collected from participants, as well as recommendations for revisions to the items.

The SASS consists of several different instruments, including questionnaires for teachers and principals. For this project, the Census Bureau asked ICF Macro to test proposed questions for these two instruments.

A total of nine principal and nine teacher participants were recruited from a list purchased from an outside vendor. An e-mail was sent out to potential participants that described the study and offered an incentive to those who participated. Interested participants who contacted ICF Macro by telephone or e-mail were then screened and scheduled for an interview.

Because some of the items to be tested related to the inclusion of student test score outcomes or growth as a criterion in principal and teacher evaluations, recruitment was focused on school districts that have some experience with this type of student performance-based evaluation.[1] It is important to note that as a result, the responses of participants to these questions are likely not representative of the entire SASS sample.

All interviews were conducted by phone. Prior to each interview, the participant was e-mailed a copy of the proposed items and asked to print them out. Participants were told not to read the items before the interview.

During the interview, participants were asked to answer each of the proposed items as they normally would if they were answering a paper survey. As they answered each item, they were asked to "think aloud"—that is, to describe out loud what they were thinking as they read and answered the question and point out anything that surprised or confused them. After the participant had answered a set of items, the interviewer would then ask a series of follow-up questions or probes and get clarification of responses as necessary. The length of the interviews averaged 15 to 20 minutes for the principal questionnaire and 25 to 30 minutes for the teacher questionnaire.

The first section discusses the testing of items for the principal questionnaire, while the second section addresses testing of items for the teacher questionnaire. Each section provides a brief profile of the participants that were recruited, and then provides findings and recommendations for each of the tested items.

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[1] Recruitment was limited to school districts that had received Teacher Incentive Fund grants from the U.S. Department of Education, since a requirement of these grants is that districts develop evaluations systems for teachers and/or administrators at least in part based on student performance.

Testing of Items for the Principal Questionnaire

Description of Participants

Nine school principals were interviewed to obtain their feedback on proposed items for the principal questionnaire. Two of the participants were from elementary schools, four were from middle or junior high schools, and three were from high schools. Participants were recruited from seven different states: Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio and Tennessee.

Summary of Interview Findings

ICF Macro was asked to test three items for the principal questionnaire. The following section describes key findings for each item, as well as recommendations for how it should be revised.

Item 1a

Were you, or are you going to be, rated in a FORMAL evaluation this school year?

__ Yes

__ No → GO TO item 1c below.

Findings

Most participants had no difficulty responding to this question.

Only one of the nine participants responded "No." This participant indicated that he was not evaluated this year, but that beginning next year he will be evaluated every year.

In general, participants interpreted a "formal evaluation" to mean a written evaluation conducted by a supervisor, and one that is documented in personnel files. Most said that their formal evaluation involves establishing goals and providing evidence of progress toward meeting those goals.

A few participants at first suggested that it would be helpful to clarify what is meant by a "formal" evaluation. However, after thinking about it more, these participants decided that it would be difficult to come up with a description that would be accurate in all situations.

Recommendations

No revisions are recommended for this item.

Item 1b

Are student test score outcomes or test score growth included as an evaluation criterion in your formal evaluation this school year?

__ Yes

__ No

Findings

All but one principal responded "Yes" when asked this question. However, some of these participants later indicated that test score outcomes or growth are <u>not</u> actually explicit criteria in their evaluation. Most said that they answered "Yes" because student test score outcomes or test score growth were measures of

their school's performance, and their school's performance was a primary component of their own personal evaluation. Some indicated that poor test scores or test score growth could lead to them being removed from their position, while good test scores could result in schoolwide bonuses or recognition.

One participant responded "No" because although student test score outcomes and growth indirectly reflect on his performance, they are not explicit criteria in his evaluation.

Recommendations

NCES should be aware that it is possible that there may be some inconsistency in responses; among principals for whom test score outcomes and growth are not explicit evaluation criteria, some may answer "No," while others may answer "Yes" because they feel they will be indirectly held responsible on these criteria. As long as this is not a problem for NCES, no revisions are needed.

Item 1c

How often are you formally evaluated?
__ Two or more times per year
__ Once a year
__ Once every 2 years
__ Once every 3 years
__ Once every 4 years
__ Once every 5 or more years
__ No formal evaluations are required

Findings

Most of the participants had no difficulty responding to this item.

Eight of the nine participants said they were formally evaluated "once a year." Most said that their annual evaluation included multiple meetings (for example, an initial meeting to set goals, an interim meeting and then a final meeting when they received a rating for their performance), but that they considered this to be part of a single evaluation process.

One participant had indicated in Item 1a that he would not be evaluated during this school year. However, he answered "once a year" to this question because he would be evaluated annually starting *next* year.

One participant indicated he was evaluated "Two or more times per year." This participant said there were initial, midpoint, and final evaluations over the course of the school year.

Recommendations

In order to preserve consistency in wording with Item 1a, rephrase this item as:

"How often are you rated in a FORMAL evaluation?"

The current response options to this item do not allow for the possibility that a principal might not receive any formal evaluations even though they are required. For that reason, rephrase the last response option as "No formal evaluations are conducted." This will also remove the risk of having two possible correct answers, as described under Teacher Item 1a.

Testing of Items for the Teacher Questionnaire

Description of Participants

Nine teachers were interviewed to obtain their feedback on items on the teacher questionnaire. Four were elementary school teachers, three were middle school teachers, and two were high school teachers. Participants were recruited from four different states: Colorado, Florida, Maryland and North Carolina.

Summary of Interview Findings

ICF Macro was asked to test seven items for the teacher questionnaire. An additional item (Item 3) was added to provide context for the subsequent questions.

Item 1a

How often are you INFORMALLY evaluated?
Consider only INFORMAL evaluations in your answer to this question, not formal evaluations or observations.
__ Two or more times per year
__ Once a year
__ Once every 2 years
__ Once every 3 years
__ Once every 4 years
__ Once every 5 or more years
__ No informal evaluations are required

Findings

When asked to describe what they thought was meant by an "informal" evaluation, participants' responses were very similar. Participants generally described "informal evaluations" as walkthroughs or observations by the principal, assistant principal, or other school/district staff that are not reflected in their personnel file. Participants indicated that the results of informal evaluations were generally not provided in written form, and they do not have an impact on their performance ratings.

All participants responded "two or more times per year" or "once a year."

While most participants thought that the question was clear and easy to answer, one found the instructions confusing. This participant was unsure whether the direction not to include "formal evaluations or observations" meant that no observations should be included (as opposed to only formal observations).

One participant commented that two of the answer options were correct. This participant said that she is informally evaluated multiple times a year, but that it is also true that no informal evaluations are *required* in her district.

Recommendations

To clarify that informal observations are to be considered in the answer to this question, rephrase the directions as follows:

"Consider only INFORMAL evaluations in your answer to this question, not formal observations or evaluations."

The current response options for this item do not allow for the possibility that a teacher might not receive any informal evaluations even though they are required. For that reason, rephrase the last response option as "No informal evaluations are *conducted*." This will also remove the risk of having two possible correct answers, as described above.

Item 1b

How often are you FORMALLY evaluated?
Consider only FORMAL evaluations in your answer to this question, not informal evaluations or observations.
__ Two or more times per year
__ Once a year
__ Once every 2 years
__ Once every 3 years
__ Once every 4 years
__ Once every 5 or more years
__ No formal evaluations are required

Findings

When asked to describe what they thought was meant by a "formal" evaluation, participants' responses were very consistent. Participants described "formal evaluations" as written evaluations that impact their career and go into their personnel file. Participants generally indicated that during their formal evaluations the principal or assistant principal observes them teaching a lesson. Prior to the observation they meet with the principal or assistant principal to discuss the lesson, and after the lesson they meet again to debrief on how the lesson went and areas for improvement.

On Items 1a and 1b, seven of the nine participants selected the same response for the number of times they were informally and formally evaluated. One participant indicated he had more informal evaluations than formal evaluations each year, while one said she had more formal evaluations than informal evaluations.

Recommendations

To maintain consistency in wording with Item 1a, rephrase this item as:

"How often are you rated in a FORMAL evaluation?"

To maintain consistency with Item 1a, rephrase the directions as follows:

"Consider only FORMAL evaluations in your answer to this question, not informal observations or evaluations."

To maintain consistency with Item 1a, change the wording of the last response option to: "No formal evaluations are *conducted*."

Item 2a

Were you, or are you going to be, rated in a FORMAL evaluation this school year?
__Yes
__ No → GO TO item 3 below.

Findings

Participants had no difficulty responding to this item. All participants responded "Yes" to this item.

Recommendations

No revisions are recommended for this item.

Item 2b

Are student test score outcomes or test score growth included as an evaluation criterion in your FORMAL evaluation this school year?
__ Yes
__ No → GO TO item 3 below.

Findings

Participants generally did not have any difficulty answering this item. Two of the nine participants answered "Yes." While others answered "No," all said that they understood the question and were aware of other teachers who were evaluated on the basis of student test score outcomes growth. For example, two participants mentioned that Teach for America fellows in their districts have student test score outcomes or test score growth included as evaluation criteria in their formal evaluation.

One participant answered "No," because test scores are not included as part of his formal evaluation. However, he later said that he does receive a monetary bonus if his students make a certain level of growth on assessment scores.

Some participants commented that although they are not currently evaluated on the basis of student test scores, these outcomes are often discussed among staff and administrators and may factor into evaluations in the near future.

Recommendations

NCES should be aware that this item may not capture teachers who are eligible for a bonus based on their students' test scores. As long as this is the intent of the question, no revisions are recommended.

Item 3

Which of the following describes the teaching certificate you currently hold that certifies you to teach in THIS state?
Mark (X) only one box.

- ❑ Regular or standard state certificate or advanced professional certificate
- ❑ Certificate issued after satisfying all requirements except the completion of a probationary period
- ❑ Certificate that requires some additional coursework, student teaching, or passage of a test before regular certification can be obtained
- ❑ Certificate issued to persons who must complete a certification program in order to continue teaching
- ❑ I do not hold any of the above certifications in THIS state

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Findings

One teacher chose the first option, but was confused because she thought the question was referring to additional certifications or endorsements for other subject areas, rather than her basic teaching certificate.

Another teacher indicated that she was in her probationary period, but still chose option A.

Recommendations

No revisions are recommended for this item.

Item 4a

Are you certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in at least one content area?
(The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is a nongovernment organization that administers National Board certification, a voluntary national assessment program that certifies teachers who meet high professional standards. In order to gain certification, the candidate must at least complete a portfolio of classroom practice and pass one or more tests of content knowledge.)

- ❑ Yes, fully certified
- ❑ No → GO TO item 4c below.

Findings

Eight of the nine participants said "No." The one participant who responded "Yes" answered correctly; she was National Board certified. All but one of the participants had previously heard of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and had a general sense of what it was.

One participant was initially not sure how to respond because he was working on his state certification and he did not know if this was related to National Board certification. Since he had never heard of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, he answered "No."

Recommendations

No revisions are recommended for this item.

Item 4b

Using Table 1 on page 4, in what content area(s) does the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification allow you to teach?

Subject Name	Code

Findings

Note: The table of certification content area codes (Table 1) is included as Attachment H-3 to this report.

The eight teachers that answered "No" to the previous item initially skipped this question. When asked to review it, none saw anything about the question that they thought would make it confusing or difficult to answer.

The one teacher who was National Board certified had no difficulty identifying the subject name and code for which she was certified (middle grades, general, code 103).

Recommendations

No revisions are recommended for this item.

Item 4c

Are you working toward National Board Certification?
- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

Findings

Most participants had no difficulty responding to this item; all answered "No."

As in Item 4a, one participant was not sure how to respond because he was working toward his state certification and did not know if this work would be related to National Board certification. This participant correctly responded "No" to this question.

Recommendations

No revisions are recommended for this item.

Attachment H-1. Interview Protocol for Testing Principal Questionnaire Items

NCES Principal Questionnaire Interview Protocol

I. Introduction

"Thank you for agreeing to assist us with this project. My name is _____, and I work for ICF Macro, a research company that the Department of Education has hired to conduct this study. Before we begin, I'd like to ask whether you have copies of the questions that we are going to be talking about today."

"The purpose of this interview is to test potential items for the Schools and Staffing Survey, a national educational survey that is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics and the Census Bureau. Before they make any changes to the survey items, the researchers always test them with potential participants to make sure that the items are as easy to understand as possible. In today's interview, I am going to have you answer some of these items just as you would if you were really taking the survey so that we can make sure that they are clear and that they are soliciting the information that the survey writers intended.

"As you answer each item I'd like you to 'think aloud.' In other words, I would like you to say aloud what you are thinking as you read each question, as you consider the answer choices, and as you finally answer the question. For example, if you are trying to decide which answer to select, please explain why you are unsure. This will help us determine whether the question is truly being understood as it is intended. Do you have any questions before we begin?"

Before you begin, ask the interviewee the screening questions below just to confirm that they are qualified for the interview:

Re-Screening

Q1.   Are you currently a school principal?

No   → ***Ineligible. Terminate phone interview***
Yes   → *Continue to Q2.*

Q2.   In which state are you currently a school principal?

_____

Q3.   What grade levels are currently available at your school?

Elementary
Middle/Junior High
High/Senior High
Other *(specify)*_____

Directions for Interviewer:

For each item, do the following:

Ask the participant to read the item, consider the potential answer choices, and then select the most appropriate choice—just as if he or she were actually completing this survey. As they do, remind them to "think aloud." If they are quiet for a period of time, ask them what they are thinking about. When they select an answer, mark it on the answer sheet for that participant.

Allow the participant to answer a complete series (as marked on the protocol) before asking probing questions. Try not to ask any probing or prompting questions as they give their initial answer; if they are having trouble understanding the item or choosing an answer, ask them to describe exactly what they are struggling with.

For each item, record three things:
 1. their final answer(s);
 2. notes on any follow-up questions; and
 3. any other notes on issues that they brought up with the item, anything they struggled with, or anything else relevant that they said while "thinking aloud."

At the end of the interview confirm the respondent's mailing address for where we should send their payment.

II. Questionnaire Items

Item 1a (Were you, or are you going to be, rated in a FORMAL evaluation this school year?)

Is there anything about this item that could be confusing or unclear?
Did you have any difficulty answering this question for any reason?
What do you think is meant by a "formal evaluations?" Do you think other principals in your district would have a different understanding of what a "formal evaluation" is?

Item 1b (Are student test score outcomes or test score growth included as an evaluation criterion in your formal evaluation this school year?)

Is there anything about this item that could be confusing or unclear?
Did you have any difficulty answering this question for any reason?

If response to Item 1b is yes:
What kind of test score outcomes are included in your evaluation (i.e., scores on state assessments, scores on local assessments)?
What implications do these test score outcomes have for you? (i.e., If your students were to perform poorly on tests, what would happen?)
Do these test score outcomes affect your compensation in any way? If so, how?

If response to Item 1b is no:
Do you know any other principals for whom the answer to this question would be "Yes"?
What kind of test score outcomes are included in their evaluation (i.e., scores on state assessments, scores on local assessments)?

What implications do these test score outcomes have for them (*i.e., If their students were to perform poorly on tests, what would happen?*)
Do these test score outcomes affect their compensation in any way? If so, how?

Item 1c (How often are you formally evaluated?)

Is there anything about this item that could be confusing or unclear?
Did you have any difficulty answering this question for any reason?

Attachment H-2. Interview Protocol for Testing Teacher Questionnaire Items

NCES Teacher Questionnaire Interview Protocol

I. Introduction

"Thank you for agreeing to assist us with this project. My name is _____, and I work for ICF Macro, a research company that the Department of Education has hired to conduct this study. Before we begin, I'd like to ask whether you have copies of the questions that we are going to be talking about today.

"The purpose of this interview is to test potential items for the Schools and Staffing Survey, a national educational survey that is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics and the Census Bureau. Before they make any changes to the survey items, the researchers always test them with potential participants to make sure that the items are as easy to understand as possible. In today's interview, I am going to have you answer some of these items just as you would if you were really taking the survey so that we can make sure that they are clear and that they are soliciting the information that the survey writers intended.

"As you answer each item I'd like you to 'think aloud.' In other words, I would like you to say aloud what you are thinking as you read each question, as you consider the answer choices, and as you finally answer the question. For example, if you are trying to decide which answer to select, please explain why you are unsure. This will help us determine whether the question is truly being understood as it is intended. Do you have any questions before we begin?"

Before you begin, ask the interviewee the screening questions below just to confirm that they are qualified for the interview:

Re-Screening

Q1.   Are you currently a K–12 classroom teacher?

No
Yes

Q2.   What state do you teach in?

_____*(record answer)*

Q3.   At what school level do you currently teach?

Elementary
Middle/Junior High
High/Senior High
Other *(specify)*_____

Directions for Interviewer:

For each item, do the following:

Ask the participant to read the item, consider the potential answer choices, and then select the most appropriate choice—just as if he or she were actually completing this survey. As they do, remind them to "think aloud." If they are quiet for a period of time, ask them what they are thinking about. When they select an answer, mark it on the answer sheet for that participant.

Allow the participant to answer a complete series (as marked on the protocol) before asking probing questions. Try not to ask any probing or prompting questions as they give their initial answer; if they are having trouble understanding the item or choosing an answer, ask them to describe exactly what they are struggling with.

For each item, record three things:
1. their final answer(s);
2. notes on any follow-up questions; and
3. any other notes on issues that they brought up with the item, anything they struggled with, or anything else relevant that they said while "thinking aloud."

At the end of the interview confirm the respondent's mailing address for where we should send their payment.

II. Questionnaire Items

Item 1a (How often are you INFORMALLY evaluated?)

Is there anything about this item that could be confusing or unclear?
Did you have any difficulty answering this question for any reason?
What do you think is meant by "informal evaluations?"

Item 1b (How often are you FORMALLY evaluated?)

Is there anything about this item that could be confusing or unclear?
Did you have any difficulty answering this question for any reason?
What do you think is meant by "formal evaluations?" How is this defined in your school? Are these different from "informal evaluations"?
Do you think other teachers in your school might give a different answer to this question? If so, why? Do you think any of them would have a different understanding of what a "formal evaluation" is?

Item 2a (Were you, or are you going to be, rated in a FORMAL evaluation this school year?)

Is there anything about this item that could be confusing or unclear?
Did you have any difficulty answering this question for any reason?

If response to Item 2a is Yes:
Please describe the process of your formal evaluation.

Item 2b (Are student test score outcomes or test score growth included as an evaluation criterion in your FORMAL evaluation this school year?)

Is there anything about this item that could be confusing or unclear?
Did you have any difficulty answering this question for any reason?

If response to Item 2b is yes:
What kind of test score outcomes are included in your evaluation (i.e., scores on state assessments, scores on local assessments)?
What implications do these test score outcomes have for you? (*i.e., If your students were to perform poorly on tests, what would happen?*)
Do these test score outcomes affect your compensation in any way? If so, how?

If response to Item 2b is no:
Do you know any other teachers for whom the answer to this question would be "Yes"?
What kind of test score outcomes are included in their evaluation (i.e., scores on state assessments, scores on local assessments)?
What implications do these test score outcomes have for them *(i.e., If their students were to perform poorly on tests, what would happen?)?*
Do these test score outcomes affect their compensation in any way? If so, how?

Item 3 (Which of the following describes the teaching certificate you currently hold that certifies you to teach in THIS state?)

Is there anything about this item that could be confusing or unclear?
Did you have any difficulty answering this question for any reason?

Item 4a (Are you certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in at least one content area?)

Is there anything about this item that could be confusing or unclear?
Did you have any difficulty answering this question for any reason?

If response to Item 4a is yes:

Please describe the steps you took to get National Board Certification.

If response to Item 4a is no:

Do you know what the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is? What do you know about it?

Item 4b (Using Table 1 on page 4, in what content area(s) does the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification allow you to teach?)

Is there anything about this item that could be confusing or unclear?
Did you have any difficulty answering this question for any reason?

Item 4c (Are you working toward National Board Certification?)

Is there anything about this item that could be confusing or unclear?
Did you have any difficulty answering this question for any reason?

If response to Item 4c is yes:

Please describe the steps you are currently taking to get National Board Certification.

Attachment H-3. Table of Certification Content Area Codes

Table 1. Certification Content Area Codes
For Question 4b

General Education

Elementary Education
101   Early childhood or Pre-K, general
102   Elementary grades, general
103   Middle grades, general

Secondary Education
103   Middle grades, general
104   Secondary grades, general

Special Education
111   Special education, general
112   Autism
113   Deaf and hard-of-hearing

114   Developmentally delayed
115   Early childhood special education
116   Emotionally disturbed or behavior disorders
117   Learning disabilities
118   Intellectual disabilities
119   Mildly or moderately disabled
120   Orthopedically impaired
121   Severely or profoundly disabled
122   Speech or language impaired
123   Traumatically brain-injured
124   Visually impaired
125   Other special education

Subject-matter Specific

Arts and Music
141   Art or arts and crafts
143   Dance
144   Drama or theater
145   Music

English and Language Arts
151   Communications
152   Composition
153   English
154   Journalism
155   Language arts
158   Reading
159   Speech

English as a Second Language
160   ESL or bilingual education: General
161   ESL or bilingual education: Spanish
162   ESL or bilingual education: Other languages

Foreign Languages
171   French
172   German
173   Latin
174   Spanish
175   Other foreign language

Health Education
181   Health education
182   Physical education

Mathematics and Computer Science
190   Mathematics
197   Computer science

Natural Sciences
210   Science, general
211   Biology or life sciences
212   Chemistry
213   Earth sciences
216   Physical sciences
217   Physics
218   Other natural sciences

Social Sciences
220   Social studies, general
221   Anthropology
225   Economics
226   Geography
227   Government or civics
228   History
231   Native American studies
233   Psychology
234   Sociology
235   Other social sciences

Career or Technical Education
241   Agriculture and natural resources
242   Business management
243   Business support
244   Marketing and distribution
245   Healthcare occupations
246   Construction trades, engineering, or science technologies (including CADD and drafting)
247   Mechanics and repair
249   Manufacturing or precision production (electronics, metalwork, textiles, etc.)
250   Communications and related technologies (including design, graphics or printing; not including computer science)
253   Personal and public services (including culinary arts, cosmetology, child care, social work, protective services, custodial services, and interior design)
254   Family and consumer sciences education
255   Industrial arts or technology education
256   Other career or technical education

Miscellaneous
262   Driver education
263   Humanities or Liberal studies
264   Library or Information science
265   Military science or ROTC
266   Philosophy
267   Religious studies, theology or divinity

Other
268   Other

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Appendix I. School and Teacher Sample Allocation Procedure

This appendix contains a report prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau. Its contents are listed below.

Introduction

As part of the sampling for the 2011–12 SASS, the sample allocation was optimized with respect to standard errors and costs. This was done to improve the efficiency of the sample design for a fixed data collection budget. To accomplish this, SASS used optimum allocation. Optimum allocation refers to a method of sample allocation, used with stratified sampling. Optimum allocation is designed to provide the most precision for the least cost. Based on optimal allocation, the best sample size for stratum *h* is:

$$n_h = n * [(N_h * S_h) / \text{sqrt}(c_h)] / [\Sigma (N_h * S_h) / \text{sqrt}(c_h)]$$

where n_h is the sample size for stratum *h*, n is total sample size, N_h is the population size for stratum *h*, S_h is the standard error of stratum *h*, and c_h is the direct cost associated with collecting data from an individual school from stratum *h*. Note that c_h does not include indirect costs, such as overhead costs. Cost data was obtained from the 2007–08 SASS. Standard errors used in the allocation were derived by averaging standard errors from the 2007–08 SASS and the 2003–04 SASS for total schools, total teachers, and total enrollment.

First, sample was allocated by sector, resulting in a desired sample allocation of 10,250 regular public schools, 750 public charter schools, and 3,000 private schools. Next, sample was allocated, optimally, to state or affiliation and grade level. Some additional constraints were imposed as part of this allocation. All strata with at least five schools were assigned a minimum sample size of five. A maximum constraint of 60 percent of the schools in the sampling frame was also imposed on strata with a minimum of nine schools in the sampling frame.

Sampling Allocation by Sector

Regular Public Schools

In public schools, the sample allocation was further restricted, with the goal of obtaining a maximum average coefficient of variation for regular public schools by grade within state. This step attempted to achieve coefficients of variation (CVs) of 15 percent for primary schools, 20 percent for middle schools, and 10 percent for high schools within a state. Sample was allocated to states so as to achieve a 10 percent overall coefficient of variation for state-level estimates. These constraints were applied assuming response rates comparable to the 2007–08 SASS could be achieved.

For the most part these constraints were achieved. However, in some smaller states, the CV requirement could not be achieved due to the 60 percent maximum sampling rate rule. This impacted middle and high school strata in these states, as well as the overall state-level CV in Delaware, North Dakota, and Vermont. Additionally, in some states, the high school CV was relaxed to 11 percent instead of 10 percent in order to avoid having an overall allocation result that differed too much from the 2007–08 result. These states where the relaxed high school CV requirement were applied were Arizona, Connecticut, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, Utah, Oregon, and Washington.

Public Charter Schools

For public charter schools, a minimum sample size of two was allocated to state by grade level strata. Beyond that, no specific CV constraints were applied. The sample was allocated using the optimum allocation procedure.

Private Schools

Private schools, at the affiliation by grade level, were generally allocated a minimum sample size of 30 schools. Exceptions were made for Jewish, nonsectarian—special emphasis, and nonsectarian—special education in order to avoid overburdening these rather small affiliations that are sometimes rather reluctant to cooperate. For these three affiliations, a minimum sample size was set at 11 percent of the sampling frame for nonsectarian schools and 10 percent for Jewish schools. Schools from the Private School Universe Survey (PSS) area frame were all selected for sample (252 in total) since they tend to have a large variance associated with them. The remaining schools were allocated using the optimum allocation procedure. One slight deviation was implemented—the affiliation by grade strata sample sizes was limited to 60 percent of the sampling frame. This additional constraint only affected Baptist secondary schools.

Once the sample had been allocated to affiliation by grade level, the sample was allocated to the sampling strata—affiliation by grade by census region. This was accomplished by calculating the measure of size of each school in the sampling frame, the square root of the number of teachers, then summing the measure of size for each stratum. The sample for affiliation by grade level was then allocated to each region proportional to the accumulated measure of size of the schools within each region. A minimum sample size of two was set for each stratum that had at least two schools.

Sampling Allocation for Teachers

Optimum allocation was not formally applied to the teacher sampling. Instead, teacher-within-school average cluster sizes were adjusted up or down in response to an analysis of the 2003–04 and 2007–08 teacher standard errors by school stratum. Previously, average cluster sizes varied only by sector and grade level. For regular public school teachers, the general goal was to be able to produce coefficients of variation of 15 percent for primary and high school teacher estimates by state and 20 percent for middle school teacher estimates by state. This was achieved by computing expected CVs using the new 2011–12 SASS school sample sizes and default teacher cluster sizes from the 2007–08 SASS. An assumption was made that all response rates would be within two percentage points of what they had been in the 2007–08 survey. Consequently, the average teacher cluster sizes for regular public schools were permitted to vary by state as well as grade level. A minimum average of three and a maximum average of 10 were implemented as a constraint.

For public charter and private school teachers, average cluster sizes were adjusted from the 2007–08 SASS so as to better achieve the desired goal of 5 percent CVs by grade level within sector. The average cluster sizes, however, were not permitted to vary by state or affiliation.

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Appendix J. Report on Results of Special Contact Districts

This appendix contains a report prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau. Its contents are listed below.

Background

Public school districts have a responsibility to shield their elementary and secondary schools from an excessive amount of interference with instructional time in the name of "research." Therefore, they can have a system similar to universities' Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), which review potential research applications. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) does not systematically search for such school district policies. Over the years, though, various surveys as well as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have identified a common set of school districts with known policies for handling research requests.

These school districts can approve or reject their schools' ability to consider participation in the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). Therefore, securing the approval of these districts is essential to the success of SASS. In past years, many districts indicated that formal approval from the district was required before they would allow schools to participate in SASS. Often this approval process required months to complete, making it difficult to obtain approval during the SASS data collection period. In the 2003–04 and 2007–08 administrations of SASS, the NCES and Education Statistics Services Institute (ESSI) attempted to identify and contact districts with a formal approval process well ahead of data collection in order to secure this approval. For the 2011–12 administration of SASS, the U.S. Census Bureau was responsible for researching and/or contacting the districts in order to obtain requirements for submission of an external research request, compiling the research request packet, and submitting the research request packet to the appropriate personnel/department. The Census Bureau identified 321 school districts that required prior approval to conduct surveys with schools in their district based on past administrations of SASS, other NCES-sponsored surveys, and the district contact calling operation that occurred in the summer of 2011. These 321 districts oversaw 1,998 schools that were selected for SASS. The Census Bureau referred to these districts as "special contact districts." Due to the high number of special contact districts, and considering available resources and time, Census Bureau staff first applied to all special contact districts with three or more sampled schools. As resources and time permitted, some districts with two or fewer sampled schools were contacted. As a result, the Census Bureau sent research requests packets to 214 districts prior to the initial mailout. Seven additional special contact districts that oversaw a total of 48 schools were identified after the initial mailout and these districts were sent research packets. The Census Bureau applied to a total of 221 districts.

Methods

Census Bureau staff began researching and/or contacting districts in February 2011. The purpose of the research or initial contact was to identify a contact person at the district and to determine what requirements needed to be satisfied before the district would approve the administration of SASS. Generally, districts required either research applications or research proposals. These applications often requested background on the study, information on the sampling plan, survey questionnaires, school resources required, and a plan for protecting the confidentiality of data. Census Bureau staff prepared research applications or proposals according to the districts' requirements and submitted them directly to the district. Census Bureau staff developed a tracking sheet that listed each of the special contact districts and provided a description of their research requirements, contact names, and the initial and final outcome of contact with the district. The Census Bureau provided regular updates on the progress of the approval process to the NCES.

Findings

By the initial mailout, 42 districts approved their participation in SASS (either unconditionally or conditionally), 126 districts had not granted permission to conduct the survey and were pending, and the remaining 46 districts denied participation. Of the special contact districts, 188 had special handling procedures related to the package contents or the appropriate recipient. School packages[1] were mailed to the majority of schools in districts where a decision was pending, as long as there were no known special procedures. These special procedures included, but were not limited to, sending the district's letter granting permission when sending materials to the school, altering the text of the letters, having principals formally approve survey participation in their schools by signing a Principal Permission Form, or having **all** participants approve survey participation by signing a Participant Informed Consent Form.

The Census Bureau ceased following up with the special contact districts regarding the applications in December 2011. At the end of follow-up efforts, 58 districts approved their schools' participation in SASS, approval in 15 of districts without special procedures was pending, approval in 90 of districts with special procedures were pending, and 58 districts denied participation. Schools in districts that denied participation and schools in districts with special procedures where approval was pending were not contacted.

The response rate of schools in the special contact districts was lower than the overall public school response rate for all school level questionnaires. The response rate comparison is shown in table J-1. These response rates differ from the unweighted final response rates as those were determined after the data were edited and completeness checks were performed.

Table J-1.   Unweighted response rates (in percent), by special district status and questionnaire: 2011–12

	Response rate	
Questionnaire	Schools in special contact districts	All public schools[1]
Teacher Listing Form	37.7	77.2
School Questionnaire	34.1	72.8
Principal Questionnaire	33.8	73.1
School Library Media Center Questionnaire	32.8	73.2

[1]Response rates for all public schools includes schools in special contact districts and schools that received the Public School Questionnaire (With District Items) in lieu of the School Questionnaire (e.g., charter, state-run, and one school districts).
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "School Control Database," 2011–12; *Documentation for the 2011–12 Schools and Staffing Survey*, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), 2011–12 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Recommendations

The special contact methodology was moderately successful at gaining cooperation from districts that required formal permission to conduct surveys within their schools. Future SASS administrations should continue to contact districts that require formal permission to conduct surveys with their schools as it reduces the number of districts that need to be contacted for permission during data collection. The approval process should begin as early in the year as possible so that the status of the majority of the special contact districts is determined prior to the initial mail-out.

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[1]The initial package of SASS questionnaires (including the Teacher Listing Form, Principal Questionnaire, and School Questionnaire, and School Library Media Center Questionnaire) was mailed to schools in October 2011.

As districts approve, they may alert the Census Bureau that they require that special procedures be implemented when contacting their schools via mail, telephone calls, or personal visits. While the Census Bureau should strive to accommodate these requests, care should be taken to limit the extent of additional resources allocated to these schools. For example, the goal should be, whenever possible, to limit the extent to which mail packages need to be modified, excluding the initial package sent to schools. Modifications to the initial package are relatively easy to accommodate because there is enough time to prepare them in advance. Modifications to subsequent school and teacher packages, while possible, are more problematic because of the decreased turnaround time and, in the case of teacher packages, the large workload that is involved.