

STUDY SERIES
(*Survey Methodology* #2003-16)

**Results & Recommendations from the Cognitive Pretesting
of the 2003 Public School Questionnaire from the
Schools and Staffing Survey**
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BACKGROUND

This report reflects the Center for Survey Methods Research's (CSMR's) evaluation of the 2003 Public School Questionnaire from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). The purpose of this evaluation was to examine respondents' reactions to both the new and revised questions, their ability to follow skip-patterns in the self-administered form and their knowledge of the requested information.

This evaluation followed a series of focus groups that were conducted by a contractor and are reported separately. Several changes to the questions were incorporated based on results from the focus group. These and further changes were investigated through cognitive testing. The following key concepts were examined through questions in the structured protocol:

- Familiarity with the concept of Average Daily Attendance and ability to calculate;
- Understanding and clarity of definitions for transitional kindergarten, transitional first grade and library media center;
- Quality of data gathered by new overcrowding questions;
- Familiarity with special programs (e.g., International Baccalaureate and Specialized Career Academy) and understanding of American Indian and Alaska Native coursework;
- Counts of substitute teachers as an indicator of teachers absenteeism;
- Clarity of questions on technology;
- Familiarity with the term Limited English Proficiency;
- Clarity of Title 1 and Free and reduced price lunch counts; and
- Charter school identification.

In the next section, the methodology used to conduct the interviews is described. Following that, the results of the interviews are documented. The questions are presented in the order of their appearance in the questionnaire as it was tested.

RESEARCH METHODS

In March and April of 2003, CSMR staff¹ conducted cognitive interviews with 12 respondents in Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, and West Virginia. Interviews ranged in duration from 45 minutes to an hour and a half and were audio-taped after gaining respondents' consent. Since the form is self-administered, respondents were instructed to read aloud as well as think aloud while completing the questions. After each section, respondents were asked to stop and revisit earlier questions with the interviewer. Structured, as well as unstructured, probes were administered retrospectively, after each section. There were five sections, which ranged from five to 17 questions each. The interview was conducted in this manner to minimize disrupting the flow of the self-administered form while still gathering information on respondents answering techniques soon after the questions were answered.

A few questions were omitted from the cognitive test due to the fact that time was limited and these items were time-consuming and gathered administrative data. These were the counts of students and teachers by race and Hispanic origin and staffing counts. These questions have been used in the past and were not changed substantially (only formatting and the order of the questions had been changed at the time of the cognitive test) for the 2003 SASS. Respondents were simply told to skip these items during the cognitive test. In the question-by-question review, the omitted questions are noted as missing items where they would have appeared.

A few questions in the survey were skipped by most respondents, thus were not tested as rigorously as the other items. These cases are noted. After discussing the concerns and recommendations with sponsors, some items were moved within the questionnaire or changed based on concerns that were out of scope for the cognitive test. These changes are not documented in this report because they were not a result of the cognitive testing.

Respondent Characteristics

Respondents from public schools in Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, and West Virginia were interviewed. Six of the schools were elementary schools, four were middle schools, and two were high schools. One school was a public charter school; another was a magnet school. There was wide variety among the schools in terms of the student population, socioeconomic status, extent of English language fluency, number of students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and level of participation in the free/reduced lunch program.

¹ Interviews were conducted by Terry DeMaio and Jennifer Hunter.

Recruiting was conducted through school board offices and by contacting schools directly, and the interviews were conducted in the school offices. Ten of the respondents were school principals. Two were assistant principals.

FINDINGS

General Findings

Both principals and assistant principals had no problems due to lack of access to information requested in the questionnaire. None of the respondents reported thinking that any of the questions were too difficult or sensitive.

One notable general problem was that respondents had difficulty with the skip patterns in the form. One respondent always took the skip, whether or not her answer corresponded to the skip pattern (i.e., whenever she saw the indication that a skip was available, she read it and skipped to that question). Other respondents answered questions that they were instructed to skip. Many respondents went back and read the instruction to skip only after they came to a question that did not logically follow their answer to the previous question. For this reason, we recommend that careful attention be paid to any edits to the data. In all cases, respondents answered the first question in the series correctly, when they went on to answer questions that they should not have, these answers sometimes provided misleading data.

Question-by-Question Findings

Section I: General Information About This School

1. Which of the following grades are offered in this school?

Mark (X) all that apply.

(Response options Kindergarten through 12th and ungraded)

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

2a. Around the first of October, how many students in grades K-12 and comparable ungraded levels were enrolled in this school (i.e., in the grades checked above in item 1)?

*** Do NOT include prekindergarten, postsecondary, or adult education students**

__Students

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

b. How many of these students were migrant students?

(Migrant students are those who move from school to school because they are children of migrant agricultural workers, including migratory dairy workers and migratory fishers.)

___ **Migrant Students**

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: Changed to make consistent with Items 1, 3 and 4. Add note not to include prekindergarten, postsecondary or adult education. This question was reworded as follows:

Around the first of October, how many migrant students attended this school?

* Do NOT include prekindergarten, postsecondary, or adult education students.

* Migrant students are those who move from school to school because they are children of migrant agricultural workers, including migratory dairy workers and migratory fishers.

__ None OR /_/_/_/_/_/ Migrant students

3. Around the first of October, how many MALE students attended this school?

*** Do NOT include prekindergarten, postsecondary, or adult education students.**

___ **Male Students**

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

Item 4 was not tested.

5. For this school year (2003-2004), what is the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) at this school?

_____ **Students**

Concerns: Most respondents had this data available as a percentage. They had to convert it back into number of students. Some respondents did this, but others simply reported the percentage in the response boxes (e.g., 94, 94.6). This resulted in extremely low ADAs in some cases, and a higher number of students attending than enrolled in others (because one of these schools had 600 students and the other had only 88).

Recommendation: For this school year (2003-2004), what is the percentage of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) at this school?

Resolution: The question was changed as follows to request percentages rather than numbers:

For this school year (2003-2004), what is the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) at this school (expressed to the nearest whole percent)?

__ % Students

6. How long is the school day for students in this school?

*** Report BOTH hours and minutes, e.g., 6 hours and 0 minutes, 5 hours and 45 minutes, etc. If the length of day varies by grade level, record the longest day.**

__ **Hours** **AND** __ **Minutes**

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

7a. Does this school have a kindergarten, transitional kindergarten, or transitional first grade?

*** Transitional (or readiness) kindergarten is an extra year of school for kindergarten-age children who are judged not ready for kindergarten.**

*** Transitional first (or prefirst) grade is an extra year of school for children who have attended kindergarten but have been judged not ready for first grade.**

__ **Yes**

__ **No - GO TO Item 8.**

Concern: We are concerned about an underreport of kindergartens, since the emphasis on transitional grades is very heavy. Several elementary school respondents, after reading the descriptions of transitional kindergarten and first grade marked “no,” even though they have kindergarten. They had forgotten that regular kindergarten is also included in the question.

Recommendation: These questions should be separated.

Resolution: This question was reworded as follows:

Does this school have a kindergarten?

*Include regular kindergarten as well as transitional kindergarten and transitional first grade.

b. How long is the school day for a kindergarten, transitional kindergarten, or transitional first grade student?

*** Mark (X) only one box.**

- Full day (4 hours or more per day)**
- Half day (less than 4 hours per day)**
- Both offered**

Concerns: None

Recommendations: Make consistent with 7a.

Resolution: The question was revised to be consistent with 7a as follows:

How long is the school day for a kindergarten student?

c. How many days per week does a kindergarten, transitional kindergarten, or transitional first grade student attend?

*** If the number of days per week varies (e.g., some students attend 3 days per week and some attend 5 days per week), record the most days that a student would attend in a week.**

__Days per week

Concerns: None

Recommendations: Make consistent with 7a.

Resolution: The question was revised to be consistent with 7a as follows:

How many days per week does a kindergarten student attend?

8. When this school was built (and, if applicable, most recently renovated) for how many students was it designed?

*** Do not count temporary buildings.**

__Students

Concern: This question asks for the building capacity when the school was built. Several respondents noted that the capacity had changed over time, even though the building itself has not changed. They reported receiving information from the facilities' manager, the board office, or other staff. Sometimes it was based on square footage, student/teacher ratios, or other factors. There are guidelines for determining building capacity that are subject to change.

Recommendation: Since this question invokes a possibly different aspect of capacity (i.e., historical capacity), this question should be revised. Given that there is a number for capacity that respondents can look up, we decided to ask for the current capacity with the understanding that it may change from year to year.

Resolution: The question was revised to ask for current capacity as follows:

What is the current capacity of this school? * Do not count capacity of temporary buildings.

9a. Does this school have one or more temporary buildings?

__No - GO TO Item 10.

__Yes

Concern: This seems to be a good measure of overcrowding, however, it does not ask if the temporary buildings are currently being used for students. One school which had been overcrowded prior to redistricting still had a temporary building that was used for storage. The respondent reported this and gave a capacity for item 9b even though no students are housed there, and he stated that he is under capacity.

Recommendation: Does this school have one or more temporary buildings that are used as classrooms or office space?

Resolution: No change. This question does provide an indication of capacity. Temporary buildings, despite how they may be used, provide additional capacity for the school.

b. For how many students (was this/were these) temporary building(s) designed?

Students

Concern: Respondents almost always reported a typical class size (or the number of desks in the classroom) as the capacity for the temporary buildings. One respondent could not give an answer at all because one of the buildings is used for offices, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, gifted, tech support, art and music, so students come and go but no students are housed there.

Recommendation: How many classrooms are located in the temporary buildings?

Resolution: Make the current question consistent with 8. It is of interest how many students could be housed in the temporary buildings, not how many are currently housed there. This deals with giving an estimate of possible capacity to compare to enrollment. Revise question as follows:

What is the current capacity of the temporary building(s)?

10. Does this school use common areas such as the cafeteria, gymnasium, or other nonacademic areas for instructional purposes to accommodate for an overflow of students?

Yes

No

Concerns: None. This new question performed well. Respondents were able to discriminate between areas that were used intentionally and those that were used do to lack of space.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

11. Do you have any teachers who do not have their own classrooms due to a lack of space?

Yes

No

Concern: This seemed to work pretty well. There was some disagreement among respondents as to whether special teachers and part time teachers counted. However, it did work well to discriminate those schools with no overcrowding versus those schools with substantial overcrowding.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

12. Does this school have a library or 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 library, media center, resource center, information center, instructional materials center, learning resource center, or some other name.)

Yes

No

Concerns: Very few of the respondents read the notes, because they felt comfortable answering without reading them. The one person who did read it thought that some of the terms (i.e., resource center, learning resource center) were specific to special education, rather than regular education.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

Section II: Admissions, Programs and Performance

13. What type of school is this?

*** Mark (X) the box that best describes this school.**

REGULAR elementary or secondary

Elementary or secondary with a SPECIAL PROGRAM EMPHASIS (such as a science/math school, performing arts school, talented/gifted school, foreign language immersion school, etc.)

SPECIAL EDUCATION – primarily serves students with disabilities

VOCATIONAL/TECHNICAL – primarily serves students being trained for

occupations

__ ALTERNATIVE – offers a curriculum designed to provide alternative or nontraditional education; does not specifically fall into the categories of regular, special program, special education, or vocational school – Please describe.

Concern: The one charter school respondent did not know there were later questions about charter schools, and he wanted to note here that he was a charter school. He answered “alternative” and wrote in “public charter.”

Recommendation: Either add an alternative for charter schools or instruct respondent how to answer (i.e., give an example where it is intended).

Resolution: Schools can be charter schools and vary along these dimensions. The screener question for charter schools (62) will be inserted after this question to allow charter schools to express their uniqueness. It will still be asked again as a screener prior to the other charter school items.

In an effort to make the question more specific, the question was reworded as follows:

Which of the following best describes this school’s major program emphasis? *Mark (X) one box.

14. Is this ENTIRE SCHOOL specifically for students who have been suspended or expelled, who have dropped out, or who have been referred for behavioral or adjustment problems?

__ Yes

__ No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

15a. Does this school have a magnet program?

(A magnet program offers enhancements such as special curricular themes or methods of instruction to attract students from outside their normal attendance area.)

__ Yes

__ No - GO TO item 16 on page --.

Concern: One respondent thought that, by nature, charter schools offer special programs and should be included.

Recommendation: Instruct charter schools how to answer.

Resolution: See resolution to item 13. Charter schools are given the opportunity prior to this question to express their special programs.

b. Is this a school-wide magnet program in which all students in this school participate in the program?

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

c. Is this magnet program intended to encourage students of different racial or ethnic backgrounds to enroll in this school for the purposes of creating racial balance or reducing racial isolation?

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

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

Yes

No- GO to item 18 on page --.

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

17. Does this school use the following requirements for admission?

a. Admission test

- Yes
- No

b. Standardized achievement test

- Yes
- No

c. Academic record

- Yes
- No

d. Special student needs (e.g., students “at risk” or with disabilities)

- Yes
- No

e. Special student aptitudes, skills, or talents

- Yes
- No

f. Personal interview

- Yes
- No

g. Recommendations

- Yes
- No

Concern: Not all respondents skipped correctly after item 16. Some consequently had difficulty with this item. For example, schools without admissions requirements had difficulty answering questions about using academic records and personal interviews – which they do use as part of the admissions procedure, just not as a criterion. Do edits correct for the wrongly answered items?

Recommendation: Ensure that edits erase data for 17 if 16 is marked “no.”

Resolution: Sponsors are going to evaluate this.

18. Does this school receive performance reports from the district that cover such things as students' scores on achievement tests or graduation rates?

Yes GO TO item 20.

No GO TO item 19.

Concerns: All respondents marked yes to this item. They receive performance reports from the district, region and/or state.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

19. Regardless of source, does your school have performance reports?

Yes GO TO item 20.

No GO TO item 21.

Concerns: Almost everyone in the test skipped this item.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

20. Does this school use these performance reports to –

a. Evaluate the progress of students in this school?

Yes

No

Concerns: A few respondents mentioned that they were not sure how to interpret this question. One indicated that performance reports do not determine the child's progression to or retention in a grade level, but he still answered affirmatively. Another respondent said no because teachers, not the school, evaluate the progress of the students.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

b. Determine the next year's instructional focus?

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

c. Realign the curriculum, such as with content standards and/or other indicator criteria?

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

d. Inform parents and the community of the school's progress?

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

e. Prompt school-level initiatives for improvement?

Yes

No

Concern: Several respondents mentioned that they thought this was a repeat of a previously asked item (b or c).

Recommendation: Evaluate meaning and whether other questions gather the same data.

Resolution: No change

21. Does this school offer the following programs?

a. Programs with special instructional approaches

(e.g., Montessori, self-paced instruction, open education, ungraded classrooms, etc.)

Yes

No

Concern: This question was interpreted very broadly by respondents. We got “yes” answers for a multi-age (1st & 2nd grade) classroom, reading recovery, special education (use self-paced instruction).

Recommendation: Evaluate meaning of this question. “Special instructional approaches” is very broad.

Resolution: No change. It was determined that respondents could use their own judgment in how to interpret this.

b. Talented/gifted program

(Designed for students with specifically identified talents or exceptional academic achievement)

Yes

No

Concern: For high school, respondents wanted to know if honors or AP classes count, because that is their alternative for talented and gifted. Respondents were unsure whether a gifted resource teacher was sufficient to answer affirmatively.

Recommendation: Specify whether honors courses are included.

Resolution: These classes should be included. Revise wording to the following:

Talented/gifted program or honors courses

c. Immersion in a foreign language program

(Curriculum is offered in a foreign language instead of English or in addition to English)

Yes

No

Concern: Respondents from high schools counted their regular foreign language program as immersion (Spanish I-IV, etc.). An elementary school respondent marked “yes” because they use a video program that is in Spanish and teaches students a few words of Spanish. This is not immersion!

Recommendation: Program in which curriculum is taught in a foreign language

Resolution: Change wording to be more specific about what is intended as follows:

Program in which at least half of the core subjects is taught in a foreign language

d. Advanced placement (AP) courses for college credit

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

e. International Baccalaureate (IB)

(An international curriculum certified by the International Baccalaureate Organization)

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

f. Specialized career academy

(Curriculum that integrates academic and vocational courses, organized around broad career areas)

Yes

No

Concern: This may also have some overcount. Schools with career programs sometimes mark yes, even though they do not have this type of academy.

Recommendation: In note, specify minimum requirements for a “program,” i.e., how many courses or semesters, etc.

Resolution: This question was revised to be more specific about the fact that specialized career academies last over a period of years:

Specialized career academy (Multi-year curriculum that integrates academic and vocational courses, organized around broad career areas)

22a. Does this school offer any course(s) on American Indian or Alaska Native topics?

- Yes
- No GO TO item 23

Concerns: This item performed as intended. Respondents focused on entire courses offered in these topics. No one responded affirmatively, which is what was expected in the area in which we interviewed.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

b. Which of the following courses are offered at this school?

a) American Indian or Alaska Native history

- Yes
- No

b) American Indian or Alaska Native language

- Yes
- No

c) American Indian or Alaska Native culture

- Yes
- No

d) American Indian or Alaska Native arts and crafts

- Yes
- No

e) American Indian tribal government or Alaska Native village government

- Yes
- No

Concerns: All respondents skipped this item.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

23. 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?

a. A program for students with discipline or adjustment problems

- Yes
- No

Concern: The term “program” was interpreted with different levels of formality by respondents. Some states have a special education program for students with behavior and/or emotional disorders. Some respondents reported these programs here, and one did not (but mentioned it here). Other respondents were unsure whether a regular discipline program should be included.

Recommendation: Specify wording to reflect intended meaning.

Resolution: Change wording to indicate that a very formal program is intended by the question:

A separate, self-contained program for students with discipline problems

b. Medical health care services

(Services provided by trained professionals to diagnose and treat health problems of students.)

Yes

No

Concern: This question was interpreted very differently by respondents, especially with respect to whether or not a school nurse counts. Seven respondents explicitly included school nurses and four explicitly excluded them. Several respondents noted that nurses do not really diagnose.

Recommendation: Add a note as to whether school nurses should be include or excluded (or criteria for inclusion).

Resolution: Change the wording to reflect that only services beyond what is provided by a school nurse should be reported:

Medical health care services beyond those provided by a school nurse (Services to diagnose and/or treat health problems of students)

c. Extended day or before-school or after-school day care programs

Yes

No

Concern: This seems to ask about two different programs. Extended day is interpreted by respondents as instructional time beyond the normal school day, presumably for students who are falling behind or are at risk. After or before school day care is for child care and not instruction.

Recommendations: Separate this into two questions.

Resolution: Separate into two questions as follows:

c. Extended day program providing instruction beyond the normal school day for students needing academic assistance

d. Before or after school day care programs.

24a. Does this school currently have a drug, alcohol, or tobacco use prevention program?

Yes

No GO to Item 25a.

Concerns: The term “program” in this question seems to have a different meaning than in previous questions. It can include much more informal activities. Respondents were inconsistent in whether or not they included guidance counselors or health classes that deal with drug abuse.

Recommendation: Specify what type of program is desired.

Resolution: Move to the Principal Questionnaire, near the school crime section. No change to question. Allow respondents to use their own judgment.

b. Is there a formal procedure in place to assess the effectiveness of this prevention program?

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: Move to the Principal Questionnaire, near the school crime section. No change to question.

25a. Does this school currently have a violence prevention program?

Yes

No GO TO Section III on page --.

Concerns: The same issues occurred here as with Q. 24a. Respondents were inconsistent as to whether they should include guidance counselors that deal with violence prevention. Similarly they did not know whether to include peer mediation or bullying programs for violence prevention.

Recommendation: Specify what type of program is desired.

Resolution: Move to the Principal Questionnaire, near the school crime section. No change to question. Allow respondents to use their own judgment.

b. Is there a formal procedure in place to assess the effectiveness of this prevention program?

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: Move to the Principal Questionnaire, near the school crime section. No change to question.

Section III: Students and Class Organization

26. Does this school use the following methods to organize classes or student groups?

Concern: Respondents did not know what the reference period was for this question. Whether they were to report if these methods had ever been used or if they were current practices would sometimes make a difference in their answers.

Recommendations: Add a reference period.

Resolution: Revise the question to add a reference period as follows:

This school year (2003-2004), does this school use the following methods to organize classes or student groups?

a. Traditional grades or academic discipline-based departments

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

b. Grades subdivided into small groups such as “houses” or “families”

Yes

No

Concerns: Several people mentioned teams, and answered affirmatively. Teams were used in middle and high schools for the core teachers of a grade and their students. For example, in one school the sixth grade is comprised two teams. Each team consists of four core teachers (English, Math, Social Studies and Science) and the half of the sixth grade students.

Recommendations: Specify whether teams should be included, or, if not, be more clear about what houses and families mean and why teams would not fit here.

Resolution: Teams are appropriately included, and need not be mentioned in the item. No change.

c. Student groups that remain two or more years with the same teacher (e.g., looping)

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

d. Interdisciplinary teaching

(E.g., two or more teachers with different academic specializations collaborate to teach an interdisciplinary program to the same group of students)

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

e. Paired or team teaching

(e.g., two or more teachers are jointly responsible for teaching a single group of students)

Yes

No

Concerns: This was sometimes misunderstood as the same thing as interdisciplinary teaching.

Recommendations: Revise wording to increase differentiation from interdisciplinary teaching.

Resolution: Revise wording as follows:

Paired or team teaching (e.g., two or more teachers in the same class at the same time are jointly responsible for teaching a single group of students)

27a. Are academic intersessions or summer school activities provided at this school for students who need extra assistance to meet academic expectations?

Yes GO to item 28a.

No

Concerns/Recommendations/Resolution: See next item.

b. Are these programs offered for students enrolled in this school at another public school location?

Yes

No

Concern: Many of the schools we spoke with have summer school at a central location for the school district each summer. The location rotates and is sometimes at the respondent's school and sometimes not, regardless of how many of their students will be attending. So, answers to items a and b will depend on the year they are asked and not on anything about the school itself. Respondents had a hard time with the skips here and many skipped b although they should have answered it and would, indeed, have answered it affirmatively.

One respondent got confused about the meaning of academic intersessions and interpreted it as including any instruction provided beyond the normal school day.

Recommendations: By combining the two questions and concentrating on the existence of these activities rather than their location, more accurate data should be gathered. Respondents all knew whether or not their students could attend summer school, and this was not always conveyed in the questionnaire due to inadvertently skipping item b (or generalizing item a to include other locations).

Because summer school is more common of the two, we recommend switching the order.

Resolution: Revise the question wording to specify a reference period. List summer school activities first, and delete reference to the location of the activities. Replace the second question in the series with one that asks about the location of the activities. Move this question and question 28a and b at the end of Section II near other questions about school programs. The series is as follows:

27a. For the last school year and last summer (2002-2003), were summer school activities or academic intersessions provided for students enrolled in this school needing academic assistance?

b. (IF YES) Are these activities provided . . .

- 1) At this school
- 2) At another school
- 3) At both this school and another school

28a. Are academic intersessions or summer school activities provided at this school for students who seek academic advancement or acceleration?

Yes GO to item 29.

No

Concerns/Recommendations/Resolution: See next item.

b. Are these programs offered for students enrolled in this school at another public school location?

Yes

No

Concerns: This question had similar issues to item 27a, and the form should be consistent.

Another issue here was that academic advancement or acceleration was sometimes understood that a student could earn course credits or skip a grade by taking summer school. It was not clear to all respondents that activities for enrichment should be included.

Recommendation: Make the item consistent with item 27 and replace “acceleration” with “enrichment.”

Resolution: Revise questions to be consistent with revisions to item 27. Also, replace “acceleration” with “enrichment.” The series is as follows:

28a. For the last school year and last summer (2002-2003), were summer school activities or academic intersessions provided for students enrolled in this school seeking academic advancement or enrichment?

b. (IF YES) Are these activities provided . . .

- 1) At this school
- 2) At another school
- 3) At both this school and another school

29. Are class periods scheduled to create extended instructional blocks of time at this school?

(E.g., block scheduling)

- Yes**
 No

Concern: This seems to be only for middle and high schools, however an elementary principal marked yes. It is unclear what this would mean in an elementary setting, although some respondents mentioned a 90-minute block for reading, which is not the intent of the question.

Recommendation: Use edit for elementary schools that disregards this data.

Resolution: No change.

30. Does this school use a calendar where number of days for students exceeds mandatory days per year?

- Yes**
 No

Concern: Respondents differed on how they answered this question pertaining to built in days for snow. When a school system, like DC, schedules a few extra days just in case there are snow days, respondents were unsure how to answer. Most respondents in this situation answered affirmatively.

Recommendation: Make this item clearer.

Resolution: Since the intent of the question is to identify schools with longer school calendars not counting snow days, add a note as follows:

*Do not consider days built in for weather-related closings.

31a. Does this school use a year-round calendar to distribute school days across twelve months?

- Yes**
- No GO TO Item 32.**

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

b. Do all students attend on the same cycle?

- Yes**
- No**

Concerns: None. All respondents skipped this item.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

32. Are the following opportunities available for students in this school?

Concern: Items a-d are of primary interest in the high school setting, but other respondents tried to interpret them in ways relevant to their own setting.

Resolution: Add a filter prior to items 32 and 33 asking if the school offers grades 9, 10, 11 or 12. Move item e, revise the question wording, and allow everyone to answer it.

a. College credits offered through community colleges, colleges, or distance learning providers

- Yes**
- No**

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

b. Work-based learning or internships, in which students earn COURSE CREDITS for supervised learning activities that occur in paid or unpaid workplace assignments

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

c. Career learning, as a course or part of a course in which students learn about possible careers

Yes

No

Concern: Respondents were inconsistent in whether they included providing a career day as career learning.

Recommendation: Specify how detailed the program should be. Rather than using the term course (which is usually for middle or high school) use the term curriculum (. . . as a course or part of the curriculum . . .)

Resolution: This is only of interest in schools that offer 9th-12th grades. The filter will eliminate the problem in elementary schools.

d. Job shadowing, in which students learn about a job by following the schedule of a person who holds that job

Yes

No

Concerns: There is some concern about respondents reporting “yes” to this item if they have one day per year where students do job shadowing.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change. This is less likely in a high school setting.

e. Distance learning, in which a course is taught primarily via television, satellite, Internet or email

Yes

No

Concern: This item could apply to any age group.

Resolution: This item will be moved to Section II and reworded as follows:

Does this school offer any distance learning course(s), in which a course is primarily taught via television, satellite, Internet or email?

33a. LAST SCHOOL YEAR (2002-2003), were any students enrolled in 12th grade?

Yes

No GO TO Section IV on page --.

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

b. What percentage graduated with a diploma?

*** Do not include certificates of completion or attendance.**

/_/_/_/_/ %

Concerns: The one respondent who got this item could not answer, but thought the guidance counselor would have this data.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

c. Of those who graduated last year, approximately what percentage went to:

/_/_/_/_/ % **Four – year colleges?**

/_/_/_/_/ % **Two – year colleges?**

Concerns: The one respondent who got this item could not answer, but thought the guidance counselor would have this data.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

Section IV: Staffing

Items 34-36 were not cognitively tested.

37. On the most recent school day, how many SHORT-TERM substitute teachers were teaching at this school?

Full-time	Part-time
/_/_/_/	/_/_/
__None	__None

Concerns: The number of substitutes reported most often corresponded to number of teachers absent. Some respondents thought about the current school day in answering this question, and others referred to the last school day; however, we do not anticipate problems with this. Most respondents indicated that a full-time substitute would be a substitute for a full-time teacher and a part-time substitute would substitute for a part-time teacher.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

38a. For this school year (2003-2004) were there teaching vacancies in this school-- that is, teaching positions for which teachers were recruited and interviewed?

Yes
 No GO TO item 40 on page --.

Concerns: None. Both principals and assistant principals felt comfortable answering this question.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

b. Did this school use the following methods to cover vacancies?

(1) Hired a fully qualified teacher

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

(2) Hired a less-than-fully qualified teacher

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

(3) Canceled planned course offerings

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

(4) Expanded some class sizes

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

(5) Added sections to other teachers' normal teaching loads

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

(6) Assigned a teacher of another subject or grade level to teach those classes

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

(7) Assigned an administrator or counselor to teach the class

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

(8) Used long-term or short-term substitutes

Yes

No

Concern: At this point, there may be some overreporting of use of long-term substitutes to include positions for which posting and recruitment had not occurred.

Recommendation: Add note: (Only include permanent teaching vacancies that were covered by a substitute.)

Resolution: This item was moved up to item (3) so the stem of the question would be more salient when answering. It is also a more likely solution than some of the other options.

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

Mark (X) one box on each line.

Not applicable in this school	No vacancy in that field	Easy	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Could not fill the vacancy
--	-------------------------------------	-------------	-------------------------------	-----------------------	---------------------------------------

- a. General elementary**
- b. Special education**
- c. English/ Language arts**
- d. Social studies**
- e. Computer science**
- f. Mathematics**
- g. Biology or life sciences**
- h. Physical sciences**
- i. English as a Second
Language (ESL), English
for Speakers of Other
Languages (ESOL),
or bilingual education**
- j. Foreign Languages**
- k. Music or art**
- l. Vocational or technical
education**

Concern: Most respondents did not discriminate correctly between Not applicable and No vacancy. Many used N/A for all positions they did not fill this year, even when they have those positions.

ESL teachers are not always hired at the school level. Sometimes the ESL teacher serves several schools in the district.

Recommendation: Combine “Not applicable” and “No vacancy.”

Resolution: Reorder questions 38 and 39, to cue respondents to think of all possible vacancies prior to asking how they were filled. Revise the wording of the question stem to be consistent with the response categories, as follows:

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

Revise the “Not applicable at this school” heading as follows:

No positions at this school

Section V: Technology

40. What is the total number of computers in this school?

/ / / / / Number of computers

None Go to item 45 on page --.

Concern: Many respondents did not initially consider office computers. Some changed the total when they remembered, others just voiced that they had forgotten them.

Recommendation: Add a note to include office computers in the total: Please include all computers in the school, including those in the offices.

Resolution: Add note as follows:

*Include computers used for both instructional and administrative purposes.

41. How many of these computers currently have access to the Internet?

/ / / / / Number of computers

None GO TO item 43 below.

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

42. Do most students have access to the Internet through computers located at this school?

__ Yes

__ No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

43. Of the total number of computers in this school (i.e., those in question 40), how many are used for instructional purposes?

*** Do not include computers that are used exclusively for administrative purposes such as record keeping or communication.**

**/_/_/_/_/ Number of computers
None Go to Section VI on page --.**

Concern: Respondents were inconsistent in their handling of computers used only by teachers. Some people explicitly included them; others explicitly excluded them.

Recommendation: Evaluate whether this is an important aspect. Add note if deemed necessary.

Resolution: No change.

44. Which of the following statements best describes the person at this school who helps TEACHERS use technology for teaching students?

- A district-level coordinator**
- A principal or another school administrator**
- A school-level coordinator who has no other responsibilities**
- A full-time teacher**
- A part-time teacher**
- A library media specialist**
- A parent, student or other volunteer**
- No one serves this function**
- Another person, please describe _____**

Concerns: Some respondents marked more than one despite the instruction. One respondent mentioned that a contractor had this position and was not sure how to indicate this.

Resolution: One response category was altered and one was added. "A parent, student or other volunteer" was changed to "A volunteer (parent, student or other)" and "A contractor" was added. The wording was revised as follows to help emphasize that one answer is

requested:

Which of the following best describes the ONE person who spends the most time helping teachers at this school use technology for teaching?

*Mark (X) the one best description for that person.

A district-level coordinator

A principal or another school administrator

A school-level coordinator who has no other responsibilities

A full-time teacher

A part-time teacher

A library media specialist

A volunteer (parent, student or other)

A contractor

No one serves this function

Another person, please describe _____

Section VI: Special Programs and Services

45. Of students enrolled in this school, how many have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) because they have disabilities or are special education students?

***Do not include prekindergarten, postsecondary, or adult education students.**

/// Students

None GO TO item 47a.

Concern: Some respondents included students with IEPs for speech, while others did not. One explicitly stated that he needed to know whether they should be included, but did not include them in the end because, although they have IEPs, they are not considered special ed students.

Recommendation: Add a note: Include (or Do not include) students with IEPs for speech.

Resolution: Take the focus away from special education. Reword the question as follows:

Of students enrolled in this school, how many have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) because they have special needs?

46a. Does this school primarily serve students with disabilities?

*** If you marked “SPECIAL EDUCATION school – primarily serves students with disabilities” for item 15, then please mark “Yes” below.**

Yes Go to item 47a.

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

b. How many of these IEP students are in each of the following instructional settings?

*** The sum of entries in item 46b should equal the entry in item 45 above.**

/_/_/_/_/ All day in a regular classroom

/_/_/_/_/ Most of the day in a regular classroom (1-20 percent of the school day receiving special education and related services outside the regular classroom)

/_/_/_/_/ Some of the day in a regular classroom (21-60 percent of the school day receiving special education and related services outside the regular classroom)

/_/_/_/_/ Little or none of the day in a regular classroom (61-100 percent of the school day receiving special education and related services outside the regular classroom)

Concern: Respondents did not think in terms of the amount of time children spend in a regular classroom. This was a difficult question for most respondents. It was especially difficult to make this calculation because the percentages contained in the definitions are opposite of the wording contained in the categories. The percentages reflect time spent outside the regular classroom; the category wording reflects time spent inside the regular classroom. Students seem to spend all day in the class, spend most of the day but are taken out for 1-2 hours per week, are in the regular class for only a few subjects, are in the regular class only for specialty classes (art, music, etc.) or spend no time in the regular class. Respondents used the categories differently as well.

Recommendations: Invert the example percentages to correspond with time in the regular class.

Resolution: Revise percentages as follows:

/_/_/_/_/ All day in a regular classroom (100 percent of the school day)

/_/_/_/_/ Most of the day in a regular classroom (80-99 percent of the school day)

/_/_/_/_/ Some of the day in a regular classroom (40-79 percent of the school day)

/_/_/_/_/ Little or none of the day in a regular classroom (0-39 percent of the school day)

47a. Of the students enrolled in this school as of October 1, have any been identified as limited-English proficient?

(Limited-English proficient (LEP) refers to students whose native or dominant language is other than English and who have sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language as to deny them the opportunity to learn successfully in an English-speaking-only classroom.)

Yes

No GO TO the NOTE preceding item 55 on page --.

Concerns: None. All respondents were comfortable with the term LEP.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

b. How many limited-English proficient students are enrolled in this school?

/_/_/_/_/ Students

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

48. Are the following used to determine whether a student is limited-English proficient?

a. Information provided by parent

Yes

No

b. Teacher observation or referral

Yes

No

c. Home language survey

Yes

No

d. Student interview

Yes

No

e. Student records

Yes

No

f. Achievement test

Yes

No

g. Language proficiency test

Yes

No

Concerns: Although placement is not always done at the school level, respondents generally had a good idea what testing was done, or thought that the ESL teacher would have this information if they asked.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

49. Does this school have instruction specifically designed to address the needs of limited-English proficient students?

Yes

No GO TO the NOTE before 55 on page --.

Concerns: None

Recommendations : None

Resolution: No change

50. Are limited-English proficient students provided with the following types of language instruction?

Concerns: Due to issues with item B and in an attempt to make the item simpler and parallel to item 51, this series was reworded.

Resolution: Change wording of the question as follows:

How are limited English proficient students taught English?

A. Instruction in English language using approaches such as ESL, structured immersion, or bilingual education

Yes

No

Concerns: See above

Resolution: Change wording of the question as follows:

Using approaches such as ESL, structured immersion or bilingual education

B. Instruction to maintain the students' fluency in his/her native language, such as Spanish lessons for Spanish speakers

Yes

No

Concerns: We are concerned about overreporting in this question. Several respondents who have 5 or fewer limited English proficient students reported "yes" to instruction to maintain fluency, although this seems unlikely. Other respondents reported that Spanish students could take the regular Spanish courses in high school.

Recommendation: Make the item clearer.

Resolution: This item was deleted.

c. Instruction in regular English/language arts classrooms

Yes

No

Concerns: See above

Resolution: No change.

51. How are limited-English proficient students taught subject matter courses such as mathematics, science, and social studies?

Are they taught—

a. In their native language?

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

b. Using ESL, bilingual, or immersion techniques?

Yes

No

Concern: There is a distinct difference between the terms ESL, bilingual and immersion. The difference between immersion and item c is not clear.

Recommendation: Clarify what it means to mark item b for immersion rather than item c.

Resolution: No change.

c. In regular English-speaking classrooms?

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

52. Does this school require limited-English proficient students to pass a test of English language proficiency to complete its limited-English proficient program?

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

53. Does this school provide the following services for parents with limited-English skills?

a. Interpreters for meetings or parent-teacher conferences

Yes

No

b. Translations of printed materials, such as newsletters, school notices or school signs

Yes

No

c. Outreach or referral services for limited-English proficient parents

Yes

No

Concern: In some cases these services would be provided if necessary, but the need has never arisen. Since there is no reference period in the question, this caused confusion for several respondents. Some respondents thought they should respond affirmatively if the district provided these services, others did not think this counted.

There is a possibility that schools without LEP students could offer these services to LEP parents. This question is not in the path of a respondent who does not have LEP students.

Recommendation: Does this school have the resources to provide the following services for parents with limited English skills? OR Does this school currently provide . . .

Ask this question of all respondents.

Resolution: No change in question wording. Respondents should use their own judgment. However, this question will be moved to follow 54 and asked of all respondents. In the question stem, PARENTS will be capped to stress that this question is not asking about services provided to students.

54. Are limited-English proficient students in this school administered assessments once or more per year to determine their level of English language proficiency?

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

NOTE: Item 55 asks for the number of students enrolled in prekindergarten in this school. Previous items asking for student counts requested that prekindergarten students be excluded. Prekindergarten students are included here because they often receive National School Lunch Program and Title 1 services asked about in items 56-61

55a. Do you have any prekindergarten students?

Yes

No **GO TO Item 56**

b. How many prekindergarten students are enrolled in this school?

/_/_/_/_/

Concerns: Several respondents read the note, then skipped the item without answering “no” because it did not apply to them.

Recommendation: Place note after question in item 55, so that those to which it applies can read it and it does not distract others.

Resolution: Revise the questions as follows, including the addition of a reference period to item b:

55a. Do you have any prekindergarten students?

(Previous items asking for student counts requested that prekindergarten students be excluded. Prekindergarten students are included here because they often receive National School Lunch Program and Title 1 services asked about in items 56-61)

Yes

No **GO TO Item 56**

55b. Around the first of October, how many prekindergarten students were enrolled in this school?

56. Does this school participate in the National School Lunch Program?

Yes

No **GO TO Item 58.**

Concern: One respondent misinterpreted this as a nutritional lunch program. We are concerned that this could be an incorrect interpretation for those respondents who do not participate.

Recommendation: Add note: (i.e., the federal free and reduced price lunch program)

Resolution: Revise question wording as follows:

Does this school participate in the National School Lunch Program (i.e., the federal free and reduced price lunch program)?

57. Around the first of October, how many applicants at this school were APPROVED for free or reduced-price lunches?

***Report a separate count for prekindergarten students**

/_/_/_/ Prekindergarten students approved

__ None

**/_/_/_/_/ Other students approved
(Kindergarten and higher)**

__ None

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

58. Around the first of October, did any students enrolled in this school receive Title 1 services at this school, or any other location?

(Title 1 is a federally funded program that provides educational services, such as remedial reading or remedial math, to children who live in areas with high concentrations of low-income families)

__ Yes

__ No GO TO Item 62.

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

59. How many students participate in the Title 1 program?

/_/_/_/_/ Prekindergarten students participating

None

**Other students participating
(Kindergarten and higher)**

None

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

60. At which grade levels are students receiving Title I services?

***Mark (X) all that apply.**

(Response options are from Prekindergarten through 12th and ungraded)

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

61. Are students receiving Title I services in—

(1) Reading/Language Arts?

Yes

No

(2) Mathematics?

Yes

No

(3) English as a Second Language (ESL)?

Yes

No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

Section VII. Charter School Information

62. 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 - Go To item 68 on page X.

Concerns: Only one charter school was interviewed for this test. There were no problems with the other respondents answering “no” to this item.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

63a. When was this school’s charter granted?

*** Report month as a number, i.e., 01 for January, 02 for February, etc.**

__ Month ___ Year

Concerns: The one respondent from a charter school was not sure when the charter was signed. He gave an estimate.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: Item was deemed unnecessary and deleted.

Q. 63b. Who granted the charter?

***Mark (X) only one box.**

A school district

The state board of education

Postsecondary institution

A state charter-granting agency

Other - What is the name of the chartering agency? _____

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

64. Is this charter school a newly created school or was it a pre-existing school?

(Pre-existing means the charter school was originally a public or private school, or part of a public or private school.)

***Mark (X) only one box.**

- A newly created school**
- A pre-existing public school**
- A pre-existing private school**
- Don't know**

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

65. When did this school start providing instruction as a public charter school?

*** Report month as a number, i.e., 01 for January, 02 for February, etc.**

__ Month _ _ _ _ Year

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

66a. Does this charter school provide support for home-based learning (home schooling)?

(Home-based learning or homeschooling is when parents or family choose to exercise the day-to-day monitoring of their children's education, which replaces full-time attendance at a campus school and is used to satisfy state compulsory education requirements.)

- __Yes**
- __No - Go To item 67a**

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

66b. Approximately what percentage of students enrolled in this school are home-based learning (homeschooled) students?

___ Percent

Concerns: This question was not tested on any respondents because it did not apply to anyone in our test.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

66c - At which location(s) are home-based learning students instructed?

***Mark (X) only one box.**

At students' homes only

Both at students' homes and at school site

Other- Describe - _____

Concerns: This question was not tested on any respondents because it did not apply to anyone in our test.

Recommendations: None

Resolution: No change

67a. Is this public charter school operated by an organization or company, other than a public school district, that also manages other schools?

__Yes - What is the name of the organization or company? _____

__No

Concerns: None

Recommendations: None

Resolution: It was determined that regular public schools could be operated by an outside organization, so this question should be asked of all public schools, not just charter schools. It was reworded as follows and placed in Section II:

Is this school operated by an organization or company, other than a public school district, that also manages other schools?

__Yes - What is the name of the organization or company? _____

No

67c. Is this public charter school part of another public school district or local education agency (LEA)?

Yes - What is the name of the district or LEA? _____

No

Concerns: This question does not make much sense without item 67b, which was deleted previously.

Recommendations/Resolution: This item was deleted.