



October 7, 2021

Director of the Strategic Collections and Clearance Governance and Strategy Division
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave. SW
LBJ, Room 6W-208B
Washington, DC 20202

Docket ID ED-2021-SCC-0130

Dear Director,

On behalf of Knowledge Alliance (KA), the following comments are provided in response to the request for comment regarding the School Pulse Panel Data Collection published in the Federal Register on September 7, 2021. Knowledge Alliance, a non-profit, non-partisan organization, is comprised of leading education organizations committed since 1971 to the greater use of high-quality and relevant data, research, evaluation and innovation in education policy and practice at all levels. Collectively, Knowledge Alliance promotes the use of rigorous research to collect, study and disseminate effective student interventions to policymakers, practitioners and the general public. As direct collectors and users of Institute of Education Sciences (IES) data and research, we appreciate and find immense value in this effort to collect pertinent on-the-ground student and staff data that can rightfully help stakeholders understand the prevalence, and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and guide research, policy and educator decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery.

Knowledge Alliance applauds IES for the rapid creation and implementation of the school pulse panel and strongly supports the survey's overall content. As a coalition of education researchers, Knowledge Alliance members understand the importance of collecting accurate and thorough data from schools and districts in real time, especially to provide support on the unique challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. While we appreciate the in-depthness of the survey, we would like to acknowledge the potential burden a survey of this length and detail may pose upon school districts. We ask that as you develop future surveys, you review these current questions to determine which may be substituted or eliminated over time in order to ensure the survey is as relevant, and concise, as possible. At the same time, to further inform the work of education researchers, Knowledge Alliance asks that IES consider the inclusion of the following additional questions in future surveys, which may be best used to replace obsolete questions over time.

Overarching Framing Questions:

In order to provide overall context to the survey, we believe the following questions should be asked of survey participants up front.

- At the time of survey completion:
 - How many or what percentage of students have tested positive for COVID-19 at your school/district over the past month?
 - How many or what percentage of staff members have tested positive for COVID-19 at your school/district over the past month?
 - What is the current rate of overall positive cases and quarantines in your school/district?

Data on Educators and Educator Professional Development and Supports:

There are some gaps in information that should be included in future surveys related to educator data and training during the pandemic, including specific supports provided to educators. Future surveys should include information on:

- The number of school employees who got diagnosed with COVID-19, broken down by demographic data.
- Any specific evidence-based professional development educators received to meet the academic, mental health and social and emotional learning needs of students.
- Any specific evidence-based professional development educators received to implement acceleration strategies to address academic gaps.
- Any specific evidence-based professional development for educators on how to use diagnostic assessment results to drive classroom instruction and improve teacher assessment literacy.
- Whether and what supports have been provided to teachers to support their mental health and stress from the COVID-19 pandemic. We propose providing a similar question to the one posed regarding students.
- To describe the leave policy for teachers or family members with COVID-19. What changes to previous policies were made to accommodate needs around COVID-19?
- Are teachers provided laptops or other devices and technology by the school that can be used at home or in school?

Curriculum Questions

Any future surveys should collect information specific adjustments to curriculum made to address student needs. Specifically, information is needed on:

- Any specific evidence-based curriculum used to meet the mental health and social and emotional learning needs of students.

- Any specific evidence-based curriculum used to address academic gaps between students and respond to individual student needs to mitigate learning loss.
- When a student needs to quarantine because of COVID-19 exposure or infection, any information on opportunities to learn and participate in classroom instruction during the time the student is out of school physically so as to not interrupt instruction, including in what modalities such opportunities exist (online, over the phone, individual teacher tutoring, etc.)

COVID-19 Emergency Plans and Response Protocols:

Future surveys should include information on how the survey responder put in place plans to deal with COVID and response to any outbreaks. Specifically, there should be questions on:

- How easily accessible to the public school and local educational agency (LEA) COVID-19 plans and protocols were
- How the public provided input to any public school and LEA COVID-19 plans and protocols
- What has the survey respondent done to raise awareness on the need for testing, masks, vaccines, and social distancing in your school?

In closing, KA would like to ensure that IES utilizes a high-quality, easy to use and comprehensive survey instrument in collecting the school pulse survey. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this notice and look forward to applying this data in our day-to-day work. Please contact Lindsay Fryer at lfryer@pennhillgroup.com and Soraya Zrikem at szrikem@pennhillgroup.com with any requests for additional information.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Norford
Chair
Knowledge Alliance