



Research Report

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Technical Documentation for the Eighth American School District Panel Survey

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About This Report

This report provides information about the sample for a survey administered to superintendents and other district leaders in fall 2023 via RAND’s American School District Panel (ASDP). This report is a direct update of the technical documentation from a previous ASDP survey cycle because our methodology remains the same (Grant et al., 2023). The results of this survey are intended to inform education policy and practice.

The American Educator Panels (AEP) are nationally representative samples of teachers, school leaders, and district leaders across the country. The panels are a proud member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research’s Transparency Initiative. For more information about any one of the survey panels, visit www.rand.org/aep.

The American School District Panel (ASDP) is a research partnership between the RAND Corporation and the Center on Reinventing Public Education. The panel also collaborates with several other education organizations—including the Council of the Great City Schools and Kitamba—to help ensure we produce actionable results. For more information, please visit the ASDP website at www.americanschooldistrictpanel.org.

RAND Education and Labor

This research was undertaken by RAND Education and Labor, a division of the RAND Corporation that conducts research on early childhood through postsecondary education programs, workforce development, and programs and policies affecting workers, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy and decisionmaking. This work was supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation [INV-056780]. Under the grant conditions of the Foundation, a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Generic License has already been assigned to the Author Accepted Manuscript version that might arise from this submission. The findings and conclusions presented are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the funders. If you are interested in using AEP data for your own analysis or in reading other AEP-related publications, please email aep@rand.org or visit www.rand.org/aep. More information about RAND can be found at www.rand.org. Questions about this report should be directed to dgrant@rand.org, and questions about RAND Education and Labor should be directed to educationandlabor@rand.org.

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Technical Documentation for the Eighth American School District Panel Survey

The American School District Panel (ASDP) is part of the RAND American Educator Panels (AEP). The AEP also includes the American Teacher Panel (ATP) and the American School Leader Panel (ASLP). A survey panel consists of individuals who agree to take a series of surveys over time. The AEP began in 2014 and expanded significantly during the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years (Robbins and Grant, 2020). The AEP is transparent about its survey methodology and is a member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research’s Transparency Initiative.

The ASDP, which is the newest panel in the AEP, includes more than 1,000 school districts as of January 2024. The ATP, meanwhile, includes more than 25,000 teachers, and the ASLP includes more than 7,000 school principals. We recruit AEP members using probabilistic sampling methods from the most-comprehensive lists of teachers, principals, and school districts available. This sampling method allows us to weight survey results to generalize to the national populations of these educators and school districts. The panels are designed to generate samples of sufficient size to facilitate national-level analyses, including analyses of prevalent subgroups. Sampling for each panel is done independently; although there might be overlap between districts, schools, principals, and teachers in the AEP, it is incidental. All AEP surveys are administered online and in English.

About the American School District Panel

The ASDP consists of traditional K–12 public school districts and charter management organizations (CMOs). We send the initial invitation to enroll in the ASDP to district superintendents and CMO directors. As part of the enrollment process, these leaders have the opportunity to designate a point of contact for the district or CMO to receive future survey requests.

Of the 4,231 districts and CMOs that we sampled and invited to join the ASDP since the panel began in fall 2020, 1,273 agreed to become members, which is a recruitment rate of 30.1 percent. The enrolled members are located across the 50 states and the District of Columbia. More information about how we constructed the panel and recruited ASDP members is available on the ASDP website (RAND Corporation, undated) and in a companion report (Grant et al., 2022).

Survey Sample and Administration

We developed the eighth ASDP survey in consultation with our funders and our project partners: the Center on Reinventing Public Education, the Council of the Great City Schools, and Kitamba. The sponsors provided feedback on the survey; however, we maintained final editorial control of the survey items. The survey had an approximate administration time of 12 minutes and was fielded online from October 12, 2023, through December 14, 2023.

Participation in ASDP surveys, including this fall 2023 survey, is limited to ASDP member districts. We emailed survey requests to the district's designated point of contact (most commonly the superintendent), who might share the survey with other district staff to determine the most appropriate person(s) to complete the survey on behalf of the district. For each section of the survey, we recommended job titles of people who are best suited to complete the questions in that section. For example, we recommended that a section on math be completed by a director of academics and that a section on principal preparation and support be completed by a director of human resources or principal supervisor. Thus, we expect that it was common for multiple people in a district to work together to complete the fall 2023 survey.

As in previous survey cycles, we invited those districts in our ASDP sample that had not yet enrolled in the ASDP to become members. For those districts, after a district superintendent or their designee consented and completed the ASDP enrollment process, we immediately requested that they complete the fall 2023 survey.

We do not use monetary incentives paid to individuals to encourage district leadership to complete the surveys or join the panel. In fall 2023, we offered districts a \$500 student scholarship, as an incentive, to participate in the ASDP surveys fielded during the 2023–2024 school year (if a district completes one of the two surveys, the district will receive \$250). The scholarship is sent by check in the name of the district following the spring 2024 school year.

Of the 1,167 districts that enrolled in the panel between fall 2020 and fall 2023, 231 participated in this survey, for a survey completion rate of 19.8 percent.¹ (Note that the fall 2023 ASDP survey did not sample CMOs.) Among the respondents, 52 were districts that had newly enrolled in the ASDP, while 179 had previously enrolled and participated in one or more ASDP surveys. Table 1 provides weighted descriptive statistics for survey respondents. The weights, which we describe in the next section, are intended to ensure that the sample reflects the national population of school districts.

¹ The completion rate is calculated by dividing the number of completed surveys by the number of panelists invited to complete this survey; the denominator does not include screened-out panelists who were deemed ineligible to participate. Completion rates do not include the recruitment rate when panelists were invited to join the ASDP.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Fall 2023 Survey Respondents

Survey Respondent Characteristics	Percentage		Population
	Sample, Unweighted	Sample, Weighted	
District enrollment size			
Small (fewer than 3,000 students)	59	71	73
Medium (3,000 to 9,999 students)	21	21	19
Large (10,000 or more students)	20	8	7
Locale			
Urban	15	7	7
Suburban	31	25	25
Town	15	20	21
Rural	39	48	48
Region			
Northeast	24	19	21
Midwest	45	39	37
South	16	23	25
West	14	18	17
Percentage of students eligible for a free or reduced-price meal			
0–24 percent	22	22	25
25–49 percent	34	35	37
50–74 percent	31	34	28
75–100 percent	13	10	10
Percentage of white students			
0–24 percent	13	7	11
25–49 percent	13	16	11
50–74 percent	24	23	19
75–100 percent	50	55	59

NOTE: This survey sample consists of 231 survey respondents, while the population sample consists of U.S. public school districts (approximately 12,500 districts) in the original sampling frame for ASDP recruitment. We obtained district characteristics from the Common Core of Data files; these data are from the 2020–2021 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Weighted proportions were calculated using survey weights, which were calibrated to match national averages.

Method for Creating the Sample and Survey Weights

We created weights to produce estimates that reflect the national population of public school districts in the United States. The weighting process accounts for the probability of selection of districts sampled for the survey and for the probability that a district responded to the survey after receiving our invitation. To create the weights, we multiplied the selection and participation probabilities and calibrated them to reproduce the population distribution of public school districts in the United States. The nonresponse adjustment is important to eliminate known sources of bias and ensure that the weighted sample matches the characteristics of districts

nationally. This weighting approach is widely used for probability sample surveys (Deville and Särndal, 1992), including U.S. Department of Education surveys, such as the Teacher Follow-Up Survey (Taie and Goldring, 2020), and to adjust for nonresponse (Kott, 2006). The main analysis weights are the product of the following two interim weights:

1. **the sample selection weight:** This is the inverse probability of selection into this survey sample using a comprehensive list of K–12 public school districts. Large urban districts were oversampled because we included member districts of the Council of the Great City Schools.
2. **the survey response weight:** This is the inverse of the modeled probability of a district completing this survey.

We subsequently recalibrated the products of these weights as necessary. Recalibration ensures that the weights recover the population estimates after selection and nonresponse adjustments are applied. The sampling and weighting approach was designed to ensure a representative sample. We used the inverse of the selection probabilities (p_{si}) as the sample selection weight; the selection probability of the districts was set to be proportional to the square root of the enrollment size of the district. We estimated the response weights by modeling the likelihood (p_{ri}) that a selected district would respond to the survey, conditional on district-level characteristics (including enrollment size, geographic region, locale, district type, and free or reduced-price meal eligibility) obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics’ Common Core of Data (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). For convenience, we used a variable selection method to choose the model that best fit the data. We estimated the main weight as the product of the sampling selection frame weight ($1/p_{si}$) and the response weight ($1/p_{ri}$), as follows:

$$main\ weight = \frac{1}{p_{si}} \times \frac{1}{p_{ri}}$$

Because there is no guarantee that this main weight will sum to the total of the population characteristics, the weight was calibrated again based on district-level characteristics to obtain the final weight. If some of these final weights were extreme, we used a trimming process (at the 95th percentile) to reduce the outliers, and the trimmed weights were reallocated for the population totals to remain the same after trimming.

Abbreviations

AEP	American Educator Panels
ASDP	American School District Panel
ASLP	American School Leader Panel
ATP	American Teacher Panel
CMO	Charter management organization

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