

# Characteristics of 2020-21 Public and Private K-12 Schools in the United States

Results From the National Teacher and Principal Survey

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Results From the National Teacher and Principal Survey

First Look—Summary Report

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# Introduction

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The 2020-21 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS)<sup>1</sup> is a nationally representative survey of public<sup>2</sup> and private<sup>3</sup> K-12 schools, principals, and teachers in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. State-level data are also available for public schools, principals, and teachers. NTPS collects data on core topics including teacher and principal preparation, classes taught, school characteristics, and demographics of the teacher and principal labor forces. The survey is developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) within the U.S. Department of Education, and data are collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. This report presents basic estimates from the Public and Private School Data Files of the 2020-21 NTPS, the third collection of NTPS.

The purpose of NTPS is to collect data to provide a detailed picture of U.S. elementary and secondary schools and their staff. Data are collected through school, principal, and teacher surveys. Data on the three surveys can be linked using the school identification number (see the *User's Manual for the 2020-21 National Teacher and Principal Survey Volumes 1-4*, Petraglia et al. 2022).

The 2020-21 NTPS used a school-based sample of public and private schools. The selected samples included about 9,900 public schools and their principals, 68,300 public school teachers, 3,000 private schools and their principals, and 8,000 private school teachers.

Data were collected between October 2020 and August 2021. Items about how schools first adapted to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic during the spring of 2020 were included in the School, Principal, and Teacher Questionnaires. See Berger et al. (2022) for an initial look at results from these items using preliminary NTPS data. In addition, an item was included at the beginning of each questionnaire asking about the current effect of COVID-19 on instruction at the school at the time the survey was completed during the 2020-21 school year. Topics in the 2020-21 NTPS school survey included

- General information about the school, such as the type of school, grades offered, types of before or after school programs available, and the length of the school day and school year;
- School staffing;
- Community services requirements; and

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<sup>1</sup> NTPS is a redesign of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). NTPS was introduced in the 2015-16 school year and administered again in 2017-18 and 2020-21.

<sup>2</sup> Public schools include traditional public and charter schools.

<sup>3</sup> While SASS included both public and private sector schools, principals, and teachers, the 2015-16 administration of NTPS only included the public sector. The 2017-18 and 2020-21 administrations of NTPS included both public and private sector schools.

- Special programs and services, such as whether there were students with Individual Education Plans,<sup>4</sup> students identified as English language learners, students who received Title I services, and whether the school participated in the National School Lunch Program.

The purpose of this First Look is to provide summaries of the new data collected using tables of descriptive information. Selected findings presented in the tables and text show the range of information available in the 2020-21 NTPS Public and Private School data files. Findings presented in the text do not include all differences in the tables and do not emphasize any one issue.

This First Look highlights findings from the NTPS public and private school surveys. Findings from the principal and teacher surveys are presented in two companion First Look reports:

- *Characteristics of 2020-21 Public and Private K-12 School Principals in the United States: Results From the National Teacher and Principal Survey First Look* (NCES 2022-112); and
- *Characteristics of 2020-21 Public and Private K-12 School Teachers in the United States: Results From the National Teacher and Principal Survey First Look* (NCES 2022-113).

Results shown in this report are not causal. Many of the variables in the report relate to one another, but only simple comparisons are presented, which do not account for all possible relationships. More information about NTPS can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps>.

For readers interested in appendixes with estimate and standard error tables, definitions of terms used in the findings and tables, and additional information about the survey from which the findings are drawn, please see the “View full report” link at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2022111>.

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<sup>4</sup> The questionnaire asked how many students had an “Individual Education Plan (IEP).” This is also known as an “Individualized Education Program.”

## Selected Findings

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- Nationwide, about 29 percent of public K-12 schools and 17 percent of private K-12 schools reported that they normally offered any courses entirely online prior to the coronavirus pandemic. Among traditional public schools that offered these online courses, 41 percent reported that few (1-10 percent of students) enrolled in the courses, and 20 percent reported that most (76 percent or more of students) enrolled in them, while among public charter schools, 26 percent reported that few students enrolled in them, and 36 percent reported that most students enrolled in them. Among private schools that offered any courses entirely online, 51 percent of Catholic schools reported that few students enrolled in the courses and 10 percent reported that most students enrolled in them (table A-1).
- Including full-time and part-time staff, public K-12 schools employed an estimated 144,490 school counselors, 65,920 psychologists, and 55,270 social workers in 2020-21. They also employed 103,850 speech therapists and 88,080 nurses, as well as 92,120 instructional coordinators and supervisors, 70,930 technology specialists, and 70,460 librarians/library media specialists. In addition, public schools employed a variety of full-time and part-time aides, such as 521,960 special education aides and 129,350 regular Title I aides. These schools also employed 53,290 security personnel<sup>5</sup> and 63,000 school resource officers<sup>6</sup> (table A-2).
- Among public K-12 schools, 50 percent of schools had staff with any specialist assignments. About 48 percent of all public schools had reading specialists, 23 percent had math specialists, and 7 percent had science specialists. In addition, 49 percent of public schools had staff with any academic coaching assignments, including coaches for reading (29 percent), math (20 percent), science (8 percent), and general instructional coaches (30 percent). Among private K-12 schools, 38 percent of schools had staff with any specialist assignments. About 32 percent of all private schools had reading specialists, 21 percent had math specialists, and 12 percent had science specialists. In addition, 29 percent of private schools had staff with any academic coaching assignments, including coaches for reading (15 percent), math (11 percent), science (7 percent), and general instructional coaches (23 percent) (table A-3).
- Overall, 49 percent of public K-12 schools and 35 percent of private K-12 schools offered instruction beyond the normal school day for students who need academic assistance. Additionally, 32 percent of public schools and 24 percent of private schools offered instruction beyond the normal school day for students who seek academic advancement or enrichment. Among public schools, a higher percentage of charter schools offered instruction beyond the normal school day for students who needed assistance (56 percent) or who sought academic advancement or enrichment (44 percent), compared to traditional public schools (48 percent and 31 percent, respectively) (table A-4).

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<sup>5</sup> Includes non-law enforcement security guards or security personnel.

<sup>6</sup> Includes career law enforcement officers with arrest authority, who have specialized training and are assigned to work in collaboration with school organizations (School Resource Officers), and sworn law enforcement officers who are not School Resource Officers.



- Among public K-12 schools, the average start time was 8:13 a.m., with elementary schools having a later average start time by a few minutes (8:16 a.m.) than middle (8:11 a.m.), combined/other (8:08 a.m.), and secondary/high (8:07 a.m.) schools. A higher percentage of public secondary/high schools (9 percent) had start times before 7:30 a.m. when compared to middle (6 percent), combined/other (3 percent), and elementary (3 percent) schools. Private K-12 schools had an average start time of 8:12 a.m., and 1 percent of private schools reported start times before 7:30 a.m. Additionally, the schools' official start times varied by the type of instruction schools reported they were offering as a result of COVID-19 at the time they completed the questionnaire. Public schools offering only distance-learning instruction as a result of COVID-19 had a later average start time by a few minutes (8:21 a.m.) than schools offering a hybrid of in-person and distance-learning instruction (8:11 a.m.) or those schools with only in-person instruction or for which they reported COVID-19 had no effect on the instruction (8:09 a.m.). Among private schools, those offering only distance-learning instruction as a result of COVID-19 had a later average start time (8:24 a.m.) than did schools offering a hybrid of in-person and distance-learning instruction (8:11 a.m.) or those schools with only in-person instruction or for which they reported COVID-19 had no effect on the instruction (8:12 a.m.) (table A-5).
- Among public K-12 schools, about 88 percent reported they were regular schools, 5 percent reported they were special program emphasis schools,<sup>7</sup> 5 percent reported they were alternative/other schools,<sup>8</sup> 2 percent reported they were special education schools,<sup>9</sup> and 1 percent reported they were career/technical/vocational schools.<sup>10</sup> Among private K-12 schools, about 81 percent reported they were regular schools, 7 percent reported they were special education schools, 5 percent reported they were Montessori schools, 3 percent reported they were special program emphasis schools, 3 percent reported they were alternative or other types of schools, and 1 percent reported they were early childhood programs or day care centers<sup>11</sup> (table A-6).
- Among public K-12 schools that had teaching vacancies in a specific field, 42 percent found it very difficult or were not able to fill the vacancies for foreign language, 40 percent for special education, 37 percent for physical sciences,<sup>12</sup> 32 percent each for English as a second language or bilingual education and for mathematics, and 31 percent each for biology or life sciences, for computer science, and for career or technical education. Among private K-12 schools that had teaching vacancies in a specific field, 44 percent found it very difficult or were not able to fill the vacancies for special education, 35 percent for computer science, 32 percent for mathematics and for foreign languages, and 31 percent for physical science and for biology or life sciences (table A-7).

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<sup>7</sup> Special program emphasis schools include schools such as science or math schools, performing arts schools, talented or gifted schools, foreign language immersion schools, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Alternative/other schools offer a curriculum designed to provide alternative or nontraditional education and do not specifically fall into the categories of regular, special program emphasis, special education, or vocational school.

<sup>9</sup> Special education schools primarily serve students with disabilities.

<sup>10</sup> Career/technical/vocational schools primarily serve students being trained for occupations.

<sup>11</sup> Early childhood program or day care centers include schools with transitional first grade as the highest grade offered.

<sup>12</sup> Physical sciences includes chemistry, physics, and earth science.



## References

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