

Tips to Increase Response Rate for Impact Aid Parent-Pupil Survey

NAFIS understands that applying for Impact Aid can be complex and time consuming (but absolutely worth it!). To help ease the process for new applicants and those wanting to increase their return rate, we surveyed NAFIS members about how they count federally impacted students, the challenges they face, and successful strategies they've developed to overcome them.

From this survey, our members report that **October** is the most common month that districts distribute their surveys. The second most common month is September. These months usually coincide with the highest student enrollment and state count dates.

For districts that utilize the parent-pupil survey, our members most commonly use a **mass letter or email** to communicate with parents about it.

How should I pick my school district's survey date?

1. **Historical enrollment data.** For one school, "Local research indicates that the end of the first month is when there are most students enrolled in the system."
2. **Alignment with an official state pupil count.** As one member says, "We use the state count date because we are already pulling the data for the state that we also need for Impact Aid."
3. **Known student mobility, such as troop movements.** For one respondent, "Population fluctuates frequently. October begins to stabilize. We have always picked a date in the middle of the week after Columbus Day with the hope of reaching the greatest number of families."
4. **Proximity to parent-teacher conferences.** Many schools use parent-teacher conferences to ensure high return rates, like a member who shared that "We choose a date near parent-teacher conferences in order to maximize personal contact with parents, as they can fill [the survey] out on-site."

How do I make sure that surveys are returned?

We asked schools with high return rates what they do. Here are their strategies:

- ✓ Provide postage paid envelopes for survey return.
- ✓ Create a step-by-step video of how to fill out the survey.
- ✓ Incentivize with classroom pizza parties and breakfasts.
- ✓ Offer time at parent-teacher conferences dedicated to completing the survey form.
- ✓ *(For military-connected districts)* Collaborate with the base military liaison or hire a military advocate.

Where do I start?

The Impact Aid application process can be overwhelming. We asked our seasoned members their advice for someone new to the process. Here are some of their ideas:

- "Create a calendar of what needs to be done, as early as July."
- "Communicate!"
- "Pay attention to detail and be organized."
- "Start early—create a timeline that has you filing the application well before the deadline."
- "Ask for help! Find a mentor in another district and ask a lot of questions."
- *(For military-connected districts)* "Get assistance from the military liaison, and ask the Garrison Commander to send a communication to parents on the installation. Ensure that installation leadership understands the importance of this task and seek joint support in reporting information."