

MEMORANDUM

TO: Brian A. Harris-Kojetin

THROUGH: Edie McArthur, NCES

FROM: Elvira Germino Hausken, NCES

Date: August 22, 2006

SUBJECT: Plan for Informing Chief State School Officers of the ECLS-K Phase IV 8th Grade Data Collection OMB Number 1850-0750

The purpose of this memo is to request permission from OMB to approve NCES's plans to inform the Chief State School Officers (CSSO), State Test Directors, and NAEP State Coordinators of the schools that members of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K) attend. In 1998, letters with information about the ECLS-K was sent to the CSSO and State Directors. It has been over eight years since the ECLS-K began in 1998 and all printed informational materials about the ECLS-K stated that it would follow the kindergarten cohort through elementary school. By sending the CSSO and state level directors this information, it is expected that recruiting the middle schools attended by the ECLS-K cohort to participate will proceed more smoothly. The plan is to send the CSSO, State Test Directors, and NAEP State Coordinators a letter and copy of the respondent newsletter. The letter provides a brief description of the ECLS-K extension into the middle schools and will be signed by Mark Schneider, Commissioner of NCES. The letter and attachments will be sent out as soon as your approval is received.

Fall 2006

«CONTACT»
«D_NAME»
«D_ADDRESS»
«D_CITY», «D_STATE» «D_ZIPCODE»

Dear «CONTACT»:

I am writing to inform you that the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is preparing to conduct the final administration of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey of the Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K) with a set of schools in your state. The ECLS-K has been tracking the progress of a nationally representative sample of students as U.S. schools and the families, teachers, and administrators who participate in them are facing unprecedented challenges. The study began during the 1998-99 school year and selected approximately 23,500 children enrolled in about 1,000 kindergarten programs to participate. The ECLS-K students entered kindergarten with different skills, knowledge, and experiences. How they are progressing informs the broad national debate about how schools should respond to the challenges posed by such diversity.

NCES collected data on this kindergarten cohort during the fall and spring of kindergarten and first grade, the spring of third and fifth grade, and will collect a final round of data in the spring of eighth grade. Data are also being collected from the students' parents, school administrators, and teachers in an effort to discern the variation in experiences that affect learning and achievement. We have already contacted parents/guardians of the sampled children and have obtained their signed permission for their children to continue to participate in the ECLS-K. Elementary schools in your state were selected as part of the national ECLS-K sample, and we have identified additional schools that include eighth grade as many of the sampled students transfer from elementary to middle schools. While we understand schools have been burdened with requests for participation in a variety of surveys, the final round of ECLS-K data during eighth grade will help complete the picture of achievement from elementary school through the end of the middle school years. Participating schools, teachers, and students will receive a cash incentive as a token of our appreciation in aiding our study.

Consistent with procedures that NCES has used in other studies, the list of sampled schools included in the study (approximately 2,600 schools nationwide for each study) will be sent to your state test director. NCES and its contractor, Westat, will work closely with the state test director should your state require special procedures for contacting and collecting data from sampled schools. Every effort will be made to minimize the burden and disruption on participating schools. Please note that student participation in the ECLS-K assessments is voluntary. No student, teacher, school, school district, or state will be identified in any study reports, and strict procedures will be in place to ensure the confidentiality of all participants.

Information using data from past rounds of the ECLS-K is available in the enclosed newsletter. You can find more information about the ECLS-K at www.nces.ed.gov/ecls. We would appreciate your support of this study. If you have any questions, please call us toll-free at 1-800-750-3517, or send an email to ecls@ed.gov. I look forward to and thank you for your support in this important study.

Sincerely,
Commissioner
NCES

cc: State Test Director
NAEP State Coordinator
Enclosure