

Superintendent Notification Letter

[letter to be sent to superintendent after initial phone call to district to select case study schools and where district respondents will be included]

[date]

Dear [name of superintendent]:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Study of Education Data Systems and Decision Making. The purpose of the study is to document the availability of education data systems, their characteristics, the prevalence and nature of their use in districts and schools, and the conditions and practices associated with effective data usage. In addition to collecting survey data from a national sample of districts, we will also be conducting site visits to 15 schools to provide a much more in-depth understanding of how school staff use data systems and the influence of the data on instructional practice. Included with this letter is a brochure that provides additional information about the study.

The case study data collection will take place in the first half of the 2006-07 school year. Two schools, [name of schools], have been selected to participate in the study. The case study data collection will take place in the first half of the 2006-07 school year. During our visit, we will meet with the principal, technology coordinator (if this position exists in the school), 4 to 6 active practitioners of data-driven decision making, and 4 to 6 teachers who represent average use to learn about how school staff use data systems and the influence of data on instructional practice. While the primary focus of our site visits is at the school level, we would also like to talk to district staff knowledgeable about the district's data system and how the district supports data-driven decision making. Every effort will be made to minimize the burden associated with our data collection activities.

We recognize that participation in this study will require time and energy from your staff, however, we are requesting your support of this important study that will inform both educational policy and practice. The information collected for this study can be used by (1) states and districts to identify and develop policies to support promising practices in data-driving decision making and to develop and implement performance measurement systems that utilize high quality data and (2) the U.S. Department of Education staff to design outreach efforts to stimulate and enhance the use of data systems to improve instruction. Please note that we will provide participants with an executive summary of our findings that will include information on promising practices regarding data-driven decision making in schools.

The information that is collected for this study will be treated in a confidential manner. Reports prepared for the Department of Education will contain no individual or school or district identifiers. Participating schools and districts will be acknowledged in the final report for their cooperation, but they will not be identified in the text of any report unless model practices are highlighted, in which case permission will be obtained from the principal and district staff before the information is included in the reporting. All participants will be informed of the purposes of the data collection and the uses that may be made of the data collected, and provided with a consent form that outlines privacy rights.

The study is being conducted by SRI International under contract with the U.S. Department of Education. If you have any comments or questions regarding the study, please contact the Deputy Director, Christine Padilla, at 650-859-3908 or via e-mail at christine.padilla@sri.com. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. Magner
Director, Office of Educational Technology

Alan Ginsburg
Director, Policy and Program Studies
Service