
**U. S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION EVALUATION AND REGIONAL ASSISTANCE**

TO: Rachel Potter, Brian Harris-Kojetin

FROM: Marsha Silverberg

SUBJECT: Notification Of Modest Change To Approved Use Of Incentives: Impact Evaluation of The DC Opportunity Scholarship Program (OMB# 1850-0800)

DATE: 4/06/2007

This memo alerts you to a small revision to the incentive plan approved as part of an 83-C on January 12, 2006.

Current Approved Plan for Incentives

In the plan, you agreed to allow us to use escalating incentives because of the great difficulty in obtaining high data collection response rates for the Impact Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program. These approved incentives were either consistent with or somewhat less generous than incentives used in other studies of voucher programs (information we provided in a December 9, 2005 memo), in which families have to attend special testing events on Saturday or in the evening because neither public nor private schools permit evaluators to conduct the testing on school campuses.

Baseline/Year 1 Follow Up Data Collection	\$50 (\$25 in original OMB submission)
Year 2 Follow Up Data Collection	\$100
Year 3 Follow Up Data Collection	\$150 ¹

Revision Proposed

We now find ourselves in a difficult position. We are halfway through the spring 2007 testing, and the response rates, particularly for cohort 2, are very low. That group of students, primarily high school aged, are in their third year of testing. Many of these older students, if they do attend the testing events, come by themselves and others, we have learned through discussions with families who have both younger and older students, refused to attend because of their preference to participate in sports or social activities.

¹ We will offer \$100 during the regular testing periods and then \$150 during the special sub-sample period for non-responders, as described in the memo on Dec. 9, 2005 and approved by OMB on January 12, 2006.

Our proposed plan attempts to incentivize STUDENTS as well as parents. We would like to offer the same total amount approved in the plan, but to provide \$50 to parents (as we have done) and \$50 in the form of a gift certificate to students. Because some families have both younger and older children and other have either younger or older, offering the gift certificate only to the older children will cause confusion and ill will among and within the families.

We have already conducted a very small test of this plan. We called 6 students in cohort 1 and asked them if they would attend the testing if they received a \$50 gift certificate; the response was enthusiastic and most had not been told by their parent(s) that they had been scheduled for testing this Saturday. Our plan is to send letters and call both the parent and the older children in the impact sample, so that the students will have an opportunity to encourage the parent to take them to testing or to allow them to go alone.

We strongly believe that this is the best option for increasing the response rates in this very important study.

We need to begin sending letters immediately, notifying parents and children of the new plan, if we hope to make this effort successful. We look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.