

Attachment 4

Thinking Reader **Parent Letter and Consent/Assent Form**

Dear Parent:

(Name of Middle School) has agreed to partner with researchers working for the U.S. Department of Education to participate in an important study about adolescent literacy. The study focuses on using a promising and exciting software program called *Thinking Reader*. Your child's English/Language Arts teacher is participating in this study to test the effectiveness of the program in improving students':

- Reading comprehension;
- Reading vocabulary;
- Use of reading strategies; and
- Motivation to read.

The *Thinking Reader* program uses computerized versions of multicultural, award-winning novels popular with students in grades 5-9. The software provides feedback and flexible, varying levels of support using a text-to-speech tool that can read words or passages aloud when highlighted, as well as glossary hyperlinks with graphics and Spanish translation, if needed.

Smaller studies of the program showed positive effects on student achievement, but we need to test the program more widely and rigorously. Fifty 6th grade English/Language Arts teachers – two in each of 25 middle schools – in Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven will be in this study. In order to test the program rigorously, the researchers will conduct a lottery to determine which teachers (one at each school) will receive the *Thinking Reader* program this year or next year. Teachers who are not selected to receive the program this year will continue teaching “business-as-usual” using the regular curriculum but they and their students will be asked to cooperate with data collection.

All participating schools will be provided with the *Thinking Reader* program for free, along with any supporting computer equipment that is needed, and hard copies of the selected novels. These additional literacy resources will help (Name of Middle School) in its efforts to help students become lifelong learners and readers.

On behalf of the entire study team, we would like to thank you for your willingness to join us in this very important endeavor.

Best regards,

(Signed by School Principal and Principal Investigator)

Parent/Student Permission Slip for the *Thinking Reader Study*

We are doing a research study.

Your child's school has teamed with the U.S. Department of Education to evaluate the effectiveness of a literacy intervention. The goal of the study is to measure the effectiveness of the *Thinking Reader* software program on reading comprehension, vocabulary, and motivation of 6th grade students.

Students and teachers will be participating in the study.

Students in the study will receive the same amount of reading instruction as the students not participating in the study. However, study participants will receive their part of their instruction using the *Thinking Reader* software program, which provides animated computer coaches that lead students through the novels students will be reading. The software provides feedback and flexible levels of support as needed by the student.

Is there any risk?

Participating in this study does not pose any learning risks or cost to the parent or student.

All information is KEPT PRIVATE.

We will be collecting student data for our study. This will allow us to measure the results of the *Thinking Reader* program on student reading achievement. All of the data collected will be kept confidential. Your child's name will not be used.

We need your CONSENT.

Your child's class has been selected to participate in this study. Please sign the permission slip below, which gives your consent for your child's participation in the study. Please have your child sign the designated permission slip as well.

I am willing to allow my child to participate in the *Thinking Reader* study. I understand that the information that the research team collects will not include any personal information about my child.

Print Name of Parent: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Print Name of Student: _____

Student Signature _____

Date: _____

School: _____