

APPENDIX R

Principal Recruitment Letter

September 2007

Principal Name
School
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Elementary School Principal:

As the Executive Director for the U.S. Department of Education's Regional Education Laboratory- Southeast (REL-SE), I am writing to request your participation in a study of an early literacy intervention in kindergarten classrooms. REL-SE is working with the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to implement and evaluate this program, called PAVEd for Success, or PAVE. PAVE, developed by researchers at the University of Georgia, was specifically designed to help promote children's vocabulary skills by supporting teachers' use of a set of strategies known to be associated with an increase in vocabulary. The study is being funded by the U.S. Department of Education and will begin just prior to the start of the 2008-2009 school year.

Recent research suggests that early oral language, vocabulary, and other pre-literacy skills are related to later reading skills, including reading comprehension. Thus, the overall goal of the PAVE program is to enhance children's vocabulary knowledge in the critical kindergarten year as a foundation for later literacy development. Our planned study is intended to examine the effect of the PAVE intervention on: 1) teacher practices in the classroom and 2) student's vocabulary development.

If you choose to have your school take part in the study, we will provide kindergarten teachers in your school with training in how to use research-based classroom practices to promote children's vocabulary development, some in-classroom support and instructional materials, including books and lesson-related activities, developed in line with the Mississippi kindergarten curriculum.

Schools agreeing to participate will be randomly assigned to receive the PAVE training for the 2008-2009 school year (the Treatment group) or for the following school year, 2009-2010 (the Control group). Thus, all schools will receive the PAVE training and the materials, with a one-year lag for the Control group. During the 2008-2009 intervention year, we will evaluate the effectiveness of the PAVE training on teacher instructional practices and children's vocabulary, using a number of different methods. During this year, in both treatment and control classrooms, we will conduct classroom observations in the fall and in the spring, record a 20-minute segment of a literacy lesson, ask teachers

to fill out a brief questionnaire on demographic characteristics and teaching experience, and conduct child assessments on a sample of children randomly selected from each participating kindergarten classroom whose parents have consented to their participation. In the following year, we will observe Treatment teachers' classrooms once again in the fall, and conduct another round of child assessments in the spring with the same children we included in the kindergarten year (who will then be in first grade).

Your participation is important to the success of this study, and I hope that you will choose to involve your school. We have enclosed some additional materials about the study and will contact you by telephone within the next two weeks to answer any questions you may have and to encourage your participation in the study. However if you have any immediate questions, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator of the study, Dr. Joan McLaughlin; the researcher who developed PAVE, Dr. Paula Schwanenflugel; or me at your earliest convenience (800-755-3277). Thank you for considering this opportunity, and we look forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Ludy van Broekhuizen, Executive Director
SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Joan McLaughlin, Principal Investigator
Abt Associates, Inc

Paula Schwanenflugel, Professor
University of Georgia

/Enclosures