

Appendix F

*Grantee Screening Notification Letter to MSAP
Project Director*



AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

Date

[Name and Title of Local MSAP Project Director]

[District Name]

[District Address]

[District City, State, zip code]

Dear *[Name]*

I work for The American Institutes for Research, a not-for-profit research organization based in Washington, DC and Palo Alto, California. With our partners at Berkeley Policy Associates, we are currently recruiting school districts to participate in an evaluation of elementary magnet schools that have recently received federal support through the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP). The Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII), which manages the MSAP, has a mandate to evaluate its program, and is very interested in understanding the relationship between implementation of its funded magnet programs and improvements in student achievement. OII has asked the Institute of Education Sciences to conduct this important evaluation. The accompanying brochure provides an overview of the study.

I am writing to request your assistance in the first key activity of the evaluation, which is the identification of districts and schools for the study. During the first months of the evaluation, we are conducting a series of screening interviews with key staff in potential study districts to determine which districts are eligible and able to participate. The study will focus on elementary schools already in operation that converted into magnet schools using MSAP grants awarded in 2004 or 2007. We will need participating districts to provide electronic files of student records data covering a number of years before and after a school adopted a magnet program. Only some of the recent MSAP grant recipients have schools with the necessary characteristics and the test score data required for the study.

The screening interviews cover four topics:

1. Characteristics of your MSAP-funded elementary magnet schools and a set of potential comparison schools;
2. Characteristics of your district's system of school choice and the operation of lotteries to select applicants to the magnet schools;
3. Characteristics of state (and possibly district) standardized tests administered to your elementary students over the past several years; and
4. The content and format of the district's student records, and the district's ability to provide data to the study.

Each interview will take about 30 minutes to complete. We will send the interview questions in advance. We will also provide, for your review, any information that we have already gathered from your MSAP grant application and other sources.

Because you manage the MSAP grant in your district, we believe that you are in the best position to tell us about the characteristics of MSAP funded and potential comparison schools, and to help us identify the appropriate individuals in your district with whom we can discuss the other three topics. We would greatly appreciate your help in scheduling interviews with those individuals. While your participation is voluntary, we hope that you will be willing to assist the Department of Education with this important evaluation. As indicated in the accompanying brochure, the answers you give us are confidential, and responses to the study's data collections will be used only for statistical purposes. The reports prepared for this study will summarize findings across the sample and will not associate responses with a specific district, school, or individual. We will not provide information that identifies respondents, students, or districts to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.

I or one of my colleagues will contact you by phone within the next few days to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Marian Eaton
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American Institutes for Research
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