

**APPENDIX B**

**DISTRICT TELEPHONE CALL PROTOCOL**

**Study of Secondary Math Teachers from  
Alternative Routes to Certification**

Call to \_\_\_\_\_ [District]

**Talking Points**

**Find the right person to talk to**

*Introduce self, organization*

Calling on behalf of U.S. Department of Education, concerning a study they are sponsoring of secondary math teachers, specifically teachers from Teach For America / the \_\_\_\_\_[TNTP] program

Following up on a letter from U.S. Department of Education about the study, sent to Superintendent \_\_\_\_\_ by FedEx, delivered on \_\_\_\_\_[date], along with study description and support letter[s] from Teach For America / The New Teacher Project.

Received? Reviewed? Deal with it self, or delegate to someone else? *Try not to get immediately passed off to the Research and Evaluation office. Stress that this is being done on behalf of the federal government, not a private entity.*

*IF SOMEONE ELSE - Get name, title, contact info, ask about best time to reach; set time, if possible. You will need about 15-20 minutes to talk.*

*Get gatekeeper's name, use it (e.g., "Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_")*

*Contact hints: ask to leave voicemail on direct line; ask if email is a good option; try contacting every other day, unless you know the person will not be available.*

**Once you think you have the right person, and time to talk**

Calling to tell you about important new federally-funded study to examine effectiveness of secondary math teachers from different kinds of training programs

*Explain study purpose*

As you know, Teach For America / the \_\_\_\_\_[TNTP] program has been important source of new secondary math teachers for your district. Program officials tell us they've placed \_\_\_\_\_[#] secondary math teachers in your district since \_\_\_\_\_[year]. With widespread shortages for such teachers, Teach for America is / programs like the \_\_\_\_\_[TNTP] program are also important in many other districts across the country.

Furthermore, the program is notably distinct from most other alternative routes to certification in that its admission policies are highly selective. Teach For America specifically targets recent

graduates from some of the country's best colleges, people who have probably taken multiple college-level math courses quite recently, and done well. / Programs like the \_\_\_\_\_ [TNTP] program seek to attract applicants with substantial, relevant work experience, such as people who have used math in their jobs.

But the question of how effective these teachers from highly selective programs such as this are, compared with other teachers you might hire who take other routes to gaining initial certification is an important one that's not been adequately addressed. This is the main question the U.S. Department of Education wants to address in this national study, because they think teacher quality could be very important for improving secondary student math achievement in America, where scores are now lower than in many other countries.

In addition to studying teacher effectiveness, we will explore how various differences in teachers' backgrounds (e.g., training, other experiences; demographics; math content knowledge) are related to any differences in effectiveness.

*Describe key study details*

I'd like first to describe the study in a bit more detail, then discuss whether/how we might include schools from your district in this study during the 2009-2010 school year.

At its core, study compares student test scores for matching teachers in a given school, with one teacher from Teach For America / the \_\_\_\_\_ [TNTP] program and the other from a different route to certification, but where they teach the same math course to similar students, typically during same period.

For example, the two teachers might both teach basic 6th grade math during 3rd period, or both might teach algebra during 5th period. (Might even have 2-3 courses in common.)

(If we can find enough teacher matches like this, teaching enough courses, across the country, then we can produce definitive findings on the effectiveness of teachers from these different routes to certification. Goal is roughly 450 matches nationwide, about half in middle schools, half in high schools.)

Here's what participation in the study would involve for your district and schools. Describe major activities chronologically:

Now through spring we would identify secondary schools that expect to have one or more eligible teacher matches in place next school year, and are willing to help us.

Spring through summer 2009 we would work with each school to ensure that students assigned to the two teachers' courses are similar to one another – on average, comparable.

Just before and during first 2 weeks of fall semester we would work with schools to deal with class roster changes due to student mobility.

(Slightly later in fall 2009 semester we would seek the necessary parent consent for collecting certain student data.)

In fall 2009 or spring 2010 we will likely assess participating teachers' math content knowledge using a test to be decided, and will compensate them financially for doing so (test, timeframe, compensation not finalized yet; awaiting decisions from ED).

In spring 2010 we will ask teachers to complete a 30-minute survey on background and training, and teaching experience, and will pay them \$30 for doing so.

In spring 2010 we would administer a subject-specific math test to just the high school students participating in study (general math, algebra 1, geometry, algebra 2; takes up one class period).

Summer/fall 2010 we will ask schools/districts to provide spring 2010 standardized math test scores for middle school students participating in study (their outcome measure), and prior year scores for all participating students (as retrospective baseline measure).

Also important to point out what it does not involve/require:

No new/additional testing for middle school students; we collect scores from the standardized tests that districts already use

No teacher/classroom observations

No curriculum changes

No surveys or interviews of students or principals or district officials

No need for schools to change teacher course assignments

No new training or professional development for teachers

In summary, real key is finding schools with eligible matching teachers (from different kinds of programs but teaching same subject to similar students). Once that match is identified and verified as meeting the study's eligibility criteria, we pretty much stay out of the way; teachers are not asked to change their teaching approach in any way and we collect test scores and aggregate up across schools and districts to compare their relative effectiveness.

How does this study sound to you?

Level of interest?

What questions or concerns do you have? Are they major or minor?

What would you need to hear to make it seem (more) palatable?

*Get initial assessment of interest or possible issues. Always seek explanation for reluctance / lack of interest. Seek to address them, or at least express possible flexibility. Points for possible emphasis:*

Study will produce new, much-needed info on relationship between teacher preparation and background, and student math achievement

Without good research, ED will not know whether/how to support different training programs, and district officials/principals won't have solid basis for decisions, either Teach for America / \_\_\_\_\_[TNTP] program reps strongly support this study; they really want to know how effective their teachers are

Study takes just one year

Absolute minimal amount of additional testing

If it turns out district is unalterably opposed to any new testing at high school level, we could consider using only middle schools there  
Minimal other data collection  
No interference in classrooms/instruction  
No cost to district  
No distractions for principals  
Our team's experience in doing studies like these; we are sensitive to school issues

### **Propose possible next steps**

OK, as for next steps, we are not necessarily seeking final decision right now on phone. We know districts have different preferences and policies for facilitating research requests. There are some options for how we could move forward.

ONE OPTION is – we could start calling schools soon, to explore which of them might be eligible for consideration.

Although we know from Teach For America / the \_\_\_\_\_[TNTP] program which of your secondary schools they've placed math teachers into, there's no way for us to know whether those schools might have eligible teacher matches unless we talk directly to school officials about potential course schedules and verify teachers' backgrounds. (Some of the Teach For America / the \_\_\_\_\_[TNTP] program teachers may not even be there any more.)

This would be most efficient for *you*, because we would not take up any more of district officials' time until we gained a sense of how well district schools might work for the study.

We could get a simple e-mail or a verbal "OK" from the district, just for contacting schools, in case schools question our legitimacy or approval to be contacting them.

We would *not* say district has approved the whole study, but would say it has approved calls to explore school suitability. We would later come back to you and tell you what we learned and – if schools look promising – then start any formal research approval process that is necessary.

Would you have any concerns/objections to this approach?

*If they approve this approach, go to Closing section*

*If they would like to hear our plan for approaching schools, whenever we get approval, here it is:*

First, send to principal similar materials – letter from Dept. of Ed. / study description, and Teach For America / the \_\_\_\_\_[TNTP] program support letter – as sent to district.

Second, call to briefly explain the study and tentatively explore suitability – e.g., by asking a few key questions about teacher backgrounds and potential teaching assignments next year.

Third, if merited, schedule in-person meeting to go over details that are too complex to cover on phone, seek voluntary agreement to cooperate.

SECOND OPTION – we could come have a meeting with you and other key decision makers in person, to give you more information, answer your questions, etc., to get more formal buy-in, before doing anything else.

We are very happy to do this.

Participants would be up to you, but maybe include: someone who oversees secondary schools, someone concerned with math instruction; someone who knows about testing and test score data and student records; someone responsible for considering external research requests; HR official.

At that meeting we would jointly decide how to move forward – for example, whether then we could begin calling schools, or if we would need to get additional clearance.

Sound like a good idea?

*If yes, get a sense of how to set this meeting up. Then go to Closing section.*

THIRD OPTION – if you prefer that we submit a formal research application before meeting with us or approving exploratory calls to schools, we can certainly do that.

Some districts we've worked with on similar evaluations have used their discretion to *waive* a formal research application because (1) we're working on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education (it's not like a local education graduate student project), and (2) all aspects of the study are being reviewed by both the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and an independent Institutional Review Board (IRB). (And we're happy to provide documentation of each of their approvals, once they're available.)

But we are certainly willing to submit an application before going further.

*If that's the preference: Determine who we should contact to learn about the process (required documents/ presentations/ timeline/ etc.), then go to Closing section.*

In terms of process and timelines, we'll look forward to learning whether just submitting the application is enough to then start calling schools or come visit for a district meeting, or whether we'll need to await a formal decision.

## **Closing**

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

*Whichever is applicable:*

We'll let you know what we learn from calls to schools and get back to you.

We'll keep in touch about scheduling a meeting.

We'll get started on the application right away.

We look forward to continuing the discussion of your district's possible participation.

You have my name and all my contact info? *Give, or offer to send via email.*

Bye.