APPENDIX A

PACKAGE SENT TO DISTRICT

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES

National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance

Month XX, 2008

Firstname Lastname
Superintendent [or other title]
District
Street Address
City, ST ZZZIP

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. Lastname:

I am writing to tell you about an important opportunity that concerns your district's partnership with [Teach For America (TFA) /and/ the ____ program, which is associated with The New Teacher Project (TNTP)]. As you know, programs like [TFA / the ____ program] are a valuable source of new teachers to many districts across the country. They provide an alternate route to certification for people who did not complete a traditional teacher training program. What's more, [TFA / the ____ program differ/s] from the large majority of alternative certification programs in that [it is/they are] highly selective in considering applicants. [TFA recruits recent graduates of some of the nation's most prestigious colleges. /The ____ program focuses on highly accomplished individuals who work in other fields, but want to become teachers.]

Although increasing numbers of new teachers have entered the profession from alternative certification programs in recent years, relatively little is known about how effective they are in the classroom, compared with teachers from traditional certification programs. The few high-quality studies that have been conducted have concerned elementary teachers, focused on non-highly selective programs, or were conducted in just one district.

I would like to invite your district to participate in a U.S. Department of Education-sponsored study that will produce much-needed information about highly selective alternative certification programs. The study will focus on teachers from TFA and TNTP-affiliated programs across the country. In addition, it will focus on secondary math teachers, because (1) many secondary schools nationwide have difficulty finding highly qualified math teachers, and (2) America lags behind many other industrialized countries in secondary math achievement, suggesting a need for evidence on ways to enhance learning at this level. We have contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, along with their partners Chesapeake Research Associates and Branch Associates, to conduct the study during the 2009-2010 school year. [TFA /and/ TNTP has/have] endorsed the study, as reflected in the accompanying support letter/s. Additional details about the project are provided in the enclosed information sheet.

A member of the research team will call you in the next few days to tell you more about the study and to discuss your district's potential participation. We may also contact your director of human resources, to whom we are sending a copy of this letter, because the HR office likely has key information on eligible teachers in your district. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at 202-219-2129 or at Stefanie.Schmidt@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

Stefanie R. Schmidt, Ph.D.
Federal Project Officer

Assessing the Effectiveness of Secondary Math Teachers from Highly Selective Routes to Alternative Certification

The Issue: How Teachers' Background and Training Affects Student Math Achievement

In recent years, many districts around the country have come to rely on teachers from Teach For America (TFA) or the Teaching Fellows programs (and similar programs by other names) fostered by The New Teacher Project (TNTP) to meet important school staffing needs. In particular, these programs often help address shortages of secondary math teachers. Among the many programs nationwide offering people an alternative route to certification, TFA and TNTP-affiliated programs are known to be particularly selective in recruiting and admitting applicants. TFA recruits recent graduates of some of the nation's most prestigious colleges. TNTP-affiliated programs focus on highly accomplished people who started careers in other fields, but want to become teachers.

However, we don't know if teachers from these highly selective programs are as effective in the classroom as other teachers. One rigorous study showed that TFA elementary teachers produced greater achievement gains in math than other teachers in the same grades and schools, but there were no differences in reading. No similar studies have been conducted at middle or high schools. A rigorous study of the effectiveness of secondary math teachers from TFA and TNTP-affiliated programs would provide important information to educators and policy makers alike regarding school staffing and different routes to teacher certification.

Research Question and Objectives

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) has selected Mathematica Policy Research and its partners, Chesapeake Research Associates and Branch Associates, to conduct such a study.

The primary research question is:

- What are the math achievement gains of secondary students taught by teachers from TFA and TNTP-affiliated programs, compared with the gains of similar students taught by other teachers?

The study also will examine:

- the achievement gains associated with different groups of teachers in the study (for example, TFA teachers, TNTP-affiliated teachers, middle school teachers, high school teachers)
- the strategies these programs use to recruit and support teachers
- how teachers from these programs differ—on background characteristics, experiences, and math content knowledge—from their peers (those teaching the same courses in the same grades and schools) who took other routes to certification

Study Requirements and Activities

A secondary school may be eligible for the study if it has at least one TFA or TNTP-affiliated teacher and one teacher from another route to certification who will teach the same math course during the same class period. Some schools that do not meet this criterion may also be eligible—in particular, those that divide all students into different administrative units or groups, such as academies, families, clusters, or schools within a school. Only matching pairs of classrooms—one taught by a TFA/TNTP-affiliated teacher and one taught by a non-TFA/non-TNTP affiliated teacher—will be included in the study. In spring and summer 2009, the study team will work closely with interested schools to ensure they are eligible and ready to participate when the school year begins in fall 2009.

Study Requirements and Activities (continued)

Student test scores. Math test scores from spring 2009 (and earlier years, if necessary) will be collected to serve as measures of prior math achievement. For middle school students, spring 2010 scores from a district- or state-administered math test will be collected to measure math achievement growth. High school students' achievement growth will be measured with a computer-based math test in spring 2010.

Student records. Student administrative records will be collected in summer 2010 to provide data on student characteristics.

Teacher survey. Participating teachers will be asked to complete a short survey in spring 2010, and will receive financial compensation for doing so.

Teacher math assessment. If ED requests that the study examine participating teachers' math content knowledge, an appropriate math assessment will be administered in fall 2010, and teachers will be financially compensated for participating.

The study involves no curriculum changes or classroom observations.

Appropriate parental permission will be obtained prior to any student data collection. Confidentiality of all data will be protected.

All data collection activities will be carefully coordinated with school officials to avoid conflicts with important school activities.

Participation requires no district or school expenditures and entails very little burden.

The Study Team

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR), a nonpartisan policy research firm, conducts research and surveys for federal and state governments, foundations, and private sector clients. The employee-owned company has conducted some of the most important evaluations of education, nutrition, welfare, employment, and early childhood policies and programs in the United States. MPR strives to improve public well-being by bringing the highest standards of quality, objectivity, and excellence to bear on the provision of information collection and analysis to its clients. MPR has offices in New Jersey, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Washington, DC. See www.mathematica-mpr.com.

Chesapeake Research Associates, LLC (CRA), provides research and evaluation services to federal and state governments, non-profit organizations, and businesses. Areas of focus include education and youth policy (early childhood education, compensatory education for low-income children, school reform, educational technology, special education, and community and youth development), welfare and public assistance policy (welfare-to-work, nutrition assistance programs, and program accountability), and international educational reform and development. CRA's offices are located in Annapolis, MD. See www.chesapeake-research.com.

Branch Associates, Inc., is a Philadelphia-based company that provides research, evaluation and technical assistance to government agencies, foundations, intermediaries, and nonprofit organizations. Combining the rigor of social science research with the savvy of experienced program evaluators and technical assistance providers, Branch Associates conducts work in the areas of education, public health, faith- and community-based initiatives, youth development, workforce development, juvenile justice, and mentoring, with an emphasis on understanding programs and outcomes for individuals in low-income communities. See www.branchassoc.com.

To Find Out More

Contact Mathematica's project director, Sheena McConnell, by phone at (202) 484-4518 or by email at smcconnell@mathematica-mpr.com.

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

The New Teacher Project

Joel I. Klein
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

October 23, 2008

Dear Chancellor Klein:

The New Teacher Project (TNTP) is a nonprofit organization that helps schools and districts around the country meet their needs for high-quality new teachers. In your district, TNTP operates the New York City Teaching Fellows Program, a rigorous alternate route to teacher certification program that recruits, selects and trains accomplished career changers and talented recent college graduates to become teachers for disadvantaged students. We are proud of the important contributions that such teachers have made to your schools and to those in many other districts nationwide.

The New Teacher Project is firmly committed to ensuring that its programs provide exceptionally high-quality teachers to high-need schools. For this reason, TNTP also strongly supports independent scientific research on the quality and effectiveness of teachers who entered the classroom through TNTP-affiliated programs. Only with well-designed and -implemented studies can we determine the extent to which these teachers are meeting students' educational needs.

Therefore, I want to express The New Teacher Project's strong support for a new study being sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and conducted by Mathematica Policy Research and its partners, Chesapeake Research Associates and Branch Associates. The study will focus, in part, on secondary-level math teachers recruited and trained through TNTP-affiliated programs around the country, including the New York City Teaching Fellows Program. It will compare the math learning gains of students taught by teachers in these programs with the gains of students taught by teachers who entered the profession through other routes to certification.

TNTP will be assisting members of the study team as they try to find teachers, schools, and districts eligible and willing to participate in the study. We encourage you to consider lending your support to this study as well.

Sincerely,

Ariela Rozman
CEO, The New Teacher Project

186 Joralemon Street, Suite 300 Brooklyn, New York 11201 Tel: 718.233.2800 Fax: 718.643.9202 Web: www.tntp.org

TEACHFORAMERICA

October 28, 2008

Dear Colleague:

Over the past 19 years, Teach for America has supplied over 20,000 teachers to school systems across the country. We are proud of the contributions we have made in helping schools meet their staffing needs, as well as the impact our corps members have had on their students.

As an organization, Teach For America supports high quality research that can advance our work and contribute to the field more broadly. Only with well designed and implemented studies can we determine the extent to which our corps members are meeting students' educational needs.

Therefore, I want to express Teach For America's strong support for a new study being sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. The study, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research and its partners Chesapeake Research Associates and Branch Associates, will focus, in part, on current and past Teach For America corps members in several districts around the country, including yours. It will compare the math learning gains of secondary students taught by Teach For America corps members with those of students taught by teachers who entered the profession through other routes to certification. While the study is not being conducted by Teach For America directly, the Teach For America program staff in your region will be assisting members of the study team as they try to identify teachers, schools, and districts eligible and willing to participate in the study.

I ask that you please consider lending your support to this study, as well.

Sincerely,

Heather Harding
Vice President, Research & Public Affairs
Teach For America