

## **APPENDIX G**

### **Letter to Schools and Notification Packet Materials**

Jerry West, Ph.D.  
Survey Director

Date

Dear Principal,

[SCHOOL NAME] is one of 100 schools selected from across the country to participate in an important study, The National Title I Study of Implementation and Outcomes: Early Childhood Language Development (ECLD). The study is sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) in the U.S. Department of Education and conducted by Mathematica Policy Research (Mathematica), in partnership with Decision Information Resources (DIR) and renowned reading expert Dr. Timothy Shanahan of the University of Illinois-Chicago. District officials have already approved the participation of district elementary schools in this study.

The study begins in fall 2011 and continues through spring 2012. It includes up to three classes per grade, and up to five [INSERT NUMBER ONCE DETERMINED BY ED] grades (prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first through third grades) Classrooms will be randomly selected if there are more than three per grade, and student samples within classrooms will be randomly selected.

The study will collect information on student learning and instructional practices through student assessments, classroom observations, teacher and administrator questionnaires, student record reviews, and parent interviews,. Findings from the study will be used to identify school programs and teacher instructional practices associated with growth in students' language development and reading achievement and to inform future evaluations of these programs and practices.

Responses to this data collection 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 any district, school or individual anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.

The enclosed packet provides additional information regarding the study. It includes:

- Study Fact Sheet
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Data Collection Schedule
- Study Brochure

- Mathematica Corporate Brochure
- DIR Corporate Brochure

Someone from the study team will be contacting you soon to discuss the study in more detail and to answer any questions you may have about participating in the study. In the meantime, if you have any questions please feel free to contact the study's Deputy Survey Director, [name], at XXX-XXX-XXXX or [e-mail].

We look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Jerry West, Ph.D.  
Survey Director

## **National Title I Study of Implementation and Outcomes: Early Childhood Language Development (ECLD)**

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **What is the study about?**

The study is being conducted to identify school-wide programs and teacher instructional practices associated with improved language development, background knowledge, and comprehension outcomes for children in prekindergarten through third grade.

#### **How will the study work?**

Mathematica will select a sample of 10 schools in each of 10 locations across the U.S. To be eligible, a school must be a Title I school and have prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first through third grades. Up to three classrooms within the specified grade levels will be randomly selected to participate in the study. Seven students in each classroom will be randomly selected and asked to participate in the study. Students with parental consent will be given assessments of language development, background knowledge, and listening or reading comprehension in fall 2011 and again in spring 2012. In addition, selected classrooms will be observed by study team members, teachers will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire and a short report on each participating student, and principals will be asked to complete a short questionnaire. School records data for each student, such as the date the student first enrolled in the school, number of absences, standardized test scores, and any information about receipt of special education services also will be collected. The parents of the children in the study will be interviewed once by phone.

#### **Who is conducting the study?**

The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences is sponsoring the study, which is conducted by a team of researchers from Mathematica Policy Research in Washington, DC, Decision Information Resources, Inc. in Houston, TX, and the University of Illinois Center for Literacy.

#### **Who is participating in the study? How many districts and schools and students will participate?**

The study sample includes 100 schools from 10 locations across the U.S. Up to three classrooms in each grade (prekindergarten, kindergarten, first through third grade) will be randomly selected for the study. An average of seven students per classroom will be randomly selected to participate in the study.

#### **Why was my school selected?**

Your school was randomly selected from eligible Title I schools in your district to help identify school-wide programs and teacher instructional practices that show promise for improving low-income children's ability to read and comprehend text. To be eligible, a school must have at least one prekindergarten classroom and at least two classrooms in each of grades kindergarten through grade 3.

#### **What will students be asked to do as part of the study?**

Students will be administered a set of standardized assessments to measure their language development, background knowledge, and listening or reading comprehension. The assessments will be administered in fall 2011 and again in spring 2012. The specific assessments and the method of administration will vary depending on the student's grade level.

All assessments for preschool and kindergarten children will be individually administered. Assessments for older children will involve a combination of individual- and group-administered tests.

**Why do you need to interview students' parents and what types of questions will they be asked?**

The parent interview will allow us to measure background characteristics of the children's home environment. Parents will be asked about their education, employment status, income level, marital status, race/ethnicity, language spoken in the home, and home literacy environment, such as reading to the child, help with homework, and availability of literacy materials.

**How much time will the study require from teachers, principals, and other school staff?**

Every effort will be made to minimize the amount of time required of teachers, principals, and other school staff participating in the study. Teachers will be asked to complete a brief, 25 minute survey and a teacher-student report for each student participating in the study. The teacher-student report is a short form requesting information on the student such as engagement, attention, instructional grouping for reading, and special placement. Principals will be asked to complete a short, 30 minute survey. School staff will be asked to provide school records information on students such as receipt of special education services, standardized test scores, grade repetition, and attendance.

In addition, the study team will observe each classroom twice during the school year (once in fall 2011 and again in spring 2012). The observations do not require any additional time from school staff, and teachers will not be asked to deviate from their typical class activities.

**Will information be kept private?**

Responses to this data collection 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 you, your district, or school to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.

**Who can I contact for more information about the study?**

Please contact [name], the study's Deputy Survey Director, at [toll-free number] or [e-mail].

# NATIONAL TITLE I STUDY OF IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES: EARLY CHILDHOOD LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT (ECLD)

## FACT SHEET

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) is sponsoring a study of 100 Title I schools to identify school programs and teacher instructional practices associated with improved language development, background, knowledge, and comprehension outcomes for children in prekindergarten through third grade.

Mathematica Policy Research, teaming with Decision Information Resources, Inc. (DIR) and Dr. Timothy Shanahan, University of IllinoisChicago, are conducting the study to answer the following research questions:

1. How do language development, background knowledge, and comprehension develop across preschool through grade three?
2. What school programs are being used in the sample of schools, and what teacher instructional practices are observed to support children's language development, background knowledge, and comprehension?
3. What school programs are associated with greater student progress in language development, background knowledge, and comprehension?
4. What teacher instructional approaches are associated with greater student progress in language development, background knowledge, and comprehension?
5. How does the quality of the home literacy environment interact with teacher instructional practices in predicting children's progress over the school year in language development, background knowledge and comprehension?

### KEY FEATURES OF THE STUDY

- ***Who is participating in the study?*** The study includes 100 schools from 10 locations across the U.S. The study will include up to five grades (prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first through third grades) and classroom and student samples will be selected for each.
- ***When will the study be conducted?*** Data collection begins in fall 2011 and continues through spring 2012.
- ***What does participation involve?*** Study activities include student assessments that will be administered by the study team to a sample of students in prekindergarten through third grade. These tests will assess language development, background knowledge, and comprehension. The team will also conduct half-day classroom observations at two points in the year (fall and spring) to observe reading instruction. Brief surveys will be administered to teachers and principals. In addition, teachers will be asked to complete a short teacher-student report on each participating student. The study will collect school records information about students such as date of

enrollment, standardized test scores, special services received, and attendance. The study team will also conduct telephone interviews with parents of participating students. The table below outlines the schedule of the specific activities.

<b>Data Collection Activity</b>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
Student assessments	X	X
Principal survey	X	
Teacher survey		X
Teacher-student report		X
Classroom observations	X	X
School records collection		X
Parent interview		X

- ***How will the data be collected?*** Several different modes of data collection will be used:

<b>Data Collection Activity</b>	<b>Mode</b>
Prekindergarten – 1st grade student assessments	Computer-based individual assessments
2nd and 3rd grade student assessments	Computer-based individual assessments; Group assessments
Principal survey	Paper copy
Teacher survey	Web-based survey
Teacher-student report	Web-based survey
Classroom observations	Direct observations
School records	Electronic forms
Parent interview	Phone

#### **REASONS TO PARTICIPATE**

- ***Contribution to knowledge about reading instruction.*** This study provides an opportunity to contribute to the knowledge base about what schools and teachers can do to support young children’s language development and reading achievement – information that policy makers and educators can use.
- ***Payment to Schools.*** To offset the administrative burden associated with supporting the study, Mathematica will make payments to participating schools in the amount of \$2,000.

## SCHOOL DISTRICT'S ROLE

- **Updating school information.** Mathematica will work with designated district staff to update school information needed to select the sample of 10 schools to participate in the study. Such information includes, but is not limited to, confirming a school's Title I status and the number of classrooms and students in prekindergarten through third grade.
- **Determination of consent process.** Mathematica and district staff will jointly determine the process for obtaining parent consent.

## SCHOOL'S ROLE

- **Distribution of consent forms.** School staff will be asked to assist with the distribution of consent forms based on the process determined by Mathematica and their district.
- **Providing student rosters.** The study team will request copies of student rosters from schools for each of the participating classrooms to identify the student sample. Rosters will be requested at three points during the school year: at the beginning of the school year, approximately two months into the school year, and at the end of the school year.
- **Assisting with student assessment and classroom observation scheduling.** Trained Mathematica staff will conduct student assessments in fall 2011 and in spring 2012. The team will need assistance from the school in scheduling to be sure we do not conflict with other important school events. Mathematica will be using a 50-minute individually-administered assessment for prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade students. In addition, second and third grade students will be given a shorter individual assessment and a group-administered test. The team will also need assistance in scheduling the classroom observations.

## OTHER INFORMATION

- **Privacy.** Responses to this data collection 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 you, your district, or school to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.
- **Study size.** The study includes 100 schools in 10 locations across the U.S.
- **Publication plans.** A final report on the national findings for the 2011-12 school year will be provided to ED in fall 2014. This report will be shared with participating districts. In addition, Mathematica will provide districts with a summary of the research findings that are of greatest interest to practitioners.



- **Contact information.** If you have any questions about the study, please contact the study's Deputy Survey Director, [name], at XXX-XXX-XXXX or [e-mail].

NATIONAL TITLE I STUDY OF IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES:  
EARLY CHILDHOOD LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT (ECLD)

DATA COLLECTION SCHEDULE

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Fall 2011</b>	<b>Spring 2012</b>
<b>Student assessments</b> – will assess language development, background knowledge, and comprehension.	X	X
<b>Principal survey</b> – questions will address reading instructional programs and practices used from prekindergarten through third grade; curricula used in prekindergarten through third grade, particularly those to support language development and early reading; supports for struggling readers; and professional development available to teachers.	X	
<b>Teacher survey</b> – items will focus on teacher background, credentials, professional development, reading programs used, books/readers used in the classroom, reading instructional activities and teaching strategies, support for struggling readers and dual language learners (DLLs), and general behavior of children in the classroom, such as disruption and cooperation.		X
<b>Teacher-student report</b> – will collect student-level data from teachers on individual child engagement/attention, instructional grouping for reading, special placement and receipt of services, support for reading, and disruptive behavior.		X
<b>Classroom observations</b> – will assess the emotional supportiveness or positive climate of the classroom, teacher language modeling and support for learning, and instructional practices that support children’s language development, comprehension of both oral and written information, and expansion of background knowledge.	X	X
<b>School records</b> – will include the date each child began at the school, receipt of special education services, grade repetition, standardized test scores, and attendance.		X
<b>Parent interview</b> – items will address family resources and risk factors, such as parent education and employment status, and home literacy environment, such as reading to the child and availability of literacy materials.		X

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The study's goal is to identify school programs and teacher instructional practices associated with improving language development, background knowledge, and comprehension outcomes for students.

### **Will information be kept private?**

Responses to this data collection 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 you, your district, or



### **How can I get more information about the study?**

Please contact Mathematica Policy Research toll-free at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

### **Who is conducting the study?**

The study is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences. Two highly-regarded independent research firms, Mathematica Policy Research and Decision Information Resources, are conducting the study in partnership with the University of Illinois-Chicago Center for Literacy.

# **The National Title I Study of Implementation and Outcomes: Early Childhood Language Development (ECLD)**



school to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.

### **How many districts and schools will participate?**

The study will include 100 schools from 10 locations across the U.S.

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES)

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**R**eadng is a critical foundational skill that enables children to learn in school and over their lifetimes. Many children, however, do not progress at the expected rate toward skilled, fluent reading that enables them to learn.

**M**ost children learn to read through a natural process of absorbing language from their home and early child care environments and by picking up early literacy skills as preschoolers. Through instruction in early elementary grades, by third grade, most children are making the transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.”

You are invited to participate in an important new study of early elementary reading, language, and comprehension sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education.

### **What are the benefits of participating?**

The study is an opportunity to learn about promising programs and teacher instructional practices associated with improved language development, background knowledge, and comprehension outcomes. The findings will also help inform future rigorous evaluations of strategies to improve these outcomes. Participating schools, teachers, and parents will be compensated for their contributions to this important study.

### **What are the study activities?**

The study will be conducted in 10 locations across the U.S. during the 2011-2012 school year. Study activities include student assessments of language development, background knowledge, and comprehension for children in pre-school through third grade. The team will also conduct classroom observations to observe reading instruction. Brief surveys will be administered to teachers and principals, and telephone interviews will be conducted with parents of participating students.



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In 1968, Mathematica® conducted the first social experiment in the United States to test ways of encouraging welfare recipients to work. The firm continues to lead the way in evaluating public programs and demonstrations, often in innovative ways. Its studies, which bridge the human life span from children's health and welfare to long-term care for older people, have provided information to guide decisions in virtually every policy area. ■

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The company has offices in Princeton, NJ, Washington, DC, and Cambridge, MA. It also maintains a state-of-the-art survey operations center. Mathematica has two operating divisions—Research and Surveys and Information Services. The Washington office also houses Mathematica's research affiliate, the Center for Studying Health System Change. ■

**In the Forefront of Assessing Change:  
The Research Division**

Mathematica's Research Division is recognized nationwide for its state-of-the-art studies to help solve our nation's most pressing social problems. It is also known for its pioneering work in building the methodology, particularly random assignment techniques, used in social research experiments. The division, located in the Princeton, Washington, DC, and Cambridge offices, designs program demonstrations, evaluates program effectiveness, and prepares policy analyses. The projects range from national studies lasting five or more years to quick-turnaround analyses. The division is well known for using survey and administrative data to answer questions

about program effectiveness. It specializes in econometric and statistical analyses of impacts, benefits and costs, quality, and value of output. To predict the effects of proposed changes, it uses sophisticated microsimulation techniques to answer “what if” questions. To clarify how programs are implemented and operate, it conducts process and case studies. It also provides technical assistance as well as programming and systems support. ■

The Research Division’s work force includes nationally recognized experts on public policy and research designs, including demographers, economists, psychologists, sociologists, statisticians, education specialists, and systems analysts. ■

### **Meeting the Demand for Information: The Surveys and Information Services Division**

As the demand for high-quality information about social and system changes has grown, Mathematica’s Surveys and Information Services Division has seen its work increase dramatically. The division offers expertise in survey design and implementation, database management, and systems design and programming. Its capabilities include sample design and implementation, questionnaire design, and computer-assisted interviewing and coding. The division, which is located in the Princeton and Washington, DC, offices, also conducts focus groups, uses video technology to collect behavioral information, enters data from surveys, and extracts and codes data from existing records. ■

The division is especially well known for its ability to achieve high response rates and collect quality data in surveys of people who are difficult to interview or hard to locate. It collects data by telephone, mail, and in person. Its sophisticated survey operations center includes nearly 200 computer-assisted telephone interviewing stations. The division maintains a



large inventory of laptops for computer-assisted personal interviewing and cellular telephones for interviewing households without telephones (a call is placed from the field to Mathematica and a computer-assisted interview is conducted). Additional computers and cellular telephones are acquired as needed for specific projects. ■

The division’s staff includes many nationally recognized experts in survey, questionnaire, and sample design, including statisticians, survey methodologists, and survey researchers. ■



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# Corporate Resume

## Company Overview

Since 1984, DIR has provided our clients the research, evaluation, and technical assistance that they require to make informed decisions, measure the effectiveness of programs, and develop strategies. DIR has multilingual capabilities and offers unique perspectives and sensitivities that are invaluable when working with diverse groups and populations. DIR is committed to consistently high quality, fiscal responsibility, and on-time delivery.

## Selected Clients and Partners

- Battelle Memorial Institute
- Baylor College of Medicine
- City of Houston
- Duke Energy Gas Transmission
- Fieldstone Alliance
- Houston Information Technology Empowerment Consortium (HITEC)
- Mathematica Policy Research
- M.D. Anderson Cancer Center
- National Education Association
- National Youth Employment Coalition
- Nonprofit Finance Fund
- Pacific Gas and Electric Company
- Rice University
- Sharpstown Center
- Texas Education Agency
- Texas Workforce Commission
- U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services
- Westat
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation

## Awards and Recognitions

- Nominee, Business Innovator of the Year, *Black Enterprise Magazine*
- Houston “100”—Top 100 Small Businesses
- Sar Levitan Advancing the Workforce Development Research Agenda Award

## Core Services

### *Research and Evaluation*

- Performance measurement and reports
- Organizational climate and diversity assessments
- Quantitative and qualitative data collection and analyses
- Policy analysis
- Demographic and market research
- Customer-satisfaction studies

### *Surveys and Data Collection*

- Computer-assisted telephone interviews
- Computer-assisted personal interviews
- In-depth interviews
- Field surveys
- Mail and self-administered surveys
- Web-based surveys
- Focus groups

### *Technical Assistance*

- Conference planning
- Customized training
- Database development and management

## Areas of Expertise

- Children and youth
- Communities and organizations
- Consumers, markets, and demographics
- Education
- Health and human services
- Workforce development

## Affiliations and Certifications

- Houston Minority Business Council
- State of Texas Recognized H.U.B.
- U.S. Department of Education—MATO Vendor
- Certified small business

For information, contact R. Malené Dixon, senior manager: 713-650-1425, x 104, or mdixon@dir-online.com.