

## **APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT MATERIALS**

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## State PISA Field Test Letter

[Date]  
[Title] [Name First] [Name Last]  
[Title/Department]  
[State]  
[Address 1]  
[Address 2]  
[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

The United States is participating in an important international study in 2012 to help benchmark student performance in the United States to that of other countries around the world: the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). Some schools in your state have been randomly selected to participate in the international field test for PISA this spring. I am writing to ask your agency to support the participation of schools in your state in the PISA field test.

PISA is administered every three years in more than 60 countries and provides important information for internationally benchmarking U.S. performance in reading, mathematics, and science of 15-year-old students. In addition, PISA 2012 will provide an opportunity for the United States to gather information on students' financial literacy compared with other countries. For the 2012 assessment, new assessment questions have been developed. The new questions will be tested this spring to ensure that they accurately measure our students' knowledge and skills. Field testing the new questions is necessary to eliminate wording or topics that would put U.S. students at a disadvantage in answering relative to students in other countries.

PISA and the field test process for schools are described in more detail in materials enclosed with this letter. The study is sponsored in the United States by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education and is conducted by [contractor's name]. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0755. While participation in this study is entirely voluntary, we ask your agency to support participation on the part of schools in your state so that the United States has a representative sample of schools across the country.

NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279, Section 153). By law, the data provided by your schools, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Public Law 107-279, Section 183 and Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347)). Reports of the findings from the field test will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

Within the next few weeks, a representative of [contractor's name] will contact sampled school districts and schools to discuss conducting data collection. In the meantime, if you have questions about the study, please do not hesitate to call [insert name of contact] at 1-888-XXX-XXXX or send an email to [contractor's email]. You may also get more information about these studies by contacting [researcher's name] at NCES at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or visiting the PISA website at: <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/>.

Thank you for your time and support. PISA is an important element in the U.S. effort to benchmark the performance and progress of our education system against international standards.

Sincerely,

Stuart Kerachsky  
Deputy Commissioner  
cc: [State assessment coordinator name]

Enclosures

## School District PISA Field Test Letter

[Date]

[Title] [Name First] [Name Last], [Title/Department]

[School District]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

The United States will be participating in an important international study in 2012 to help benchmark student performance in the United States compared to that in other countries around the world: the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA 2012). We are contacting you because one or more schools in your district have been randomly selected to represent the United States in the international field test for PISA this spring.

PISA is administered every three years in more than 60 countries and provides important information for internationally benchmarking U.S. performance in reading, mathematics, and science of 15-year-old students. In addition, PISA 2012 will provide an opportunity for the United States to gather information on students' financial literacy compared with other countries. The United States will also administer computer-based assessments in mathematics, reading and problem solving. In some schools, all students will take a paper-based assessment with a subsample of students taking the computer-based assessments. In other schools, students will only take the computer-based assessment. For the 2012 assessment, new assessment questions have been developed. The new questions will be tested this spring to ensure that they accurately measure our students' knowledge and skills. Field testing the new questions is necessary to eliminate wording or topics that would put U.S. students at a disadvantage in answering relative to students in other countries.

We ask your agency to support the participation of schools in your district in the PISA field test, which is vital to ensure that the PISA assessment is fair and the procedures for sampling students are comparable across countries. Schools that participate in the 2011 field test will not be sampled again for the 2012 main assessment. In addition, to compensate their time and efforts, participating schools will receive {\$200/\$800} (or equivalent in equipment or supplies) and each student who takes the field test will receive \$25. Some students will also be selected to participate in a second test session to try out questions administered on a computer. These students will receive an additional \$15. In addition, each school's PISA school coordinator will receive {\$100/\$200} for their time and effort to coordinate PISA in the school.

Materials enclosed with this letter describe PISA and the field test process for schools in more detail. The assessment is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and is conducted by [contractor's name], a research organization based in [area office located]. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0755. While participation in this study is entirely voluntary, we ask your agency to support participation on the part of schools in your district so that the United States has a representative sample of schools across the country.

Within the next few days, a representative of [contractor's name] will contact the following school or schools in your district that have been selected for the field test: [LIST SAMPLED SCHOOLS HERE...].

NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279, Section 153). By law, the data provided by your schools, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Public Law 107-279, Section 183 and Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-

347)). We will disclose the names of schools only to the governing district for each school, and we require that each district maintain the confidentiality of the sampled schools in the PISA field test. Reports of the findings from the field test will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call [insert name of contact] at 1-888-XXX-XXXX or send an email to [contractor's email]. You may also get more information about this study by contacting [researcher's name] at NCES at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or visiting the PISA website at: <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/>.

Thank you for your time and support. PISA is an important element in the U.S. effort to benchmark the performance and progress of our education system against international standards.

Sincerely,

Stuart Kerachsky  
Deputy Commissioner

## School PISA Field Test Letter

[Date]

[Title] [Name First] [Name Last], [Title/Department]

[School District]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

I am writing to inform you about the upcoming Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2012, in which the United States will participate along with more than 60 other countries. PISA provides important international benchmarking information in reading, mathematics, science, general problem-solving, and financial literacy of 15-year-old students. We are notifying you now because your school has been randomly selected to take part in the PISA field test this spring.

New assessment questions have been developed for PISA and they will be field tested this spring to ensure that they accurately measure our students' knowledge and skills. Field testing the new questions is necessary to eliminate wording or topics that would put U.S. students at a disadvantage in answering relative to students in other countries.

I encourage your school's participation in the PISA field test as the test is vital to ensure the assessment is fair and its samples of students are comparable across countries. Schools that participate in the 2011 field test will not be sampled again for the 2012 main assessment. In addition, to compensate your time and efforts, participating schools will receive {\$200/\$800} (or equivalent in equipment or supplies) and each student who takes the field test will receive \$25. Some students will also be selected to participate in a second test session to try out questions administered on a computer. These students will receive an additional \$15. In addition, each school's PISA school coordinator will receive {\$100/\$200} for their time and effort to coordinate PISA in the school.

Materials enclosed with this letter describe PISA and the field test process for schools in more detail. The assessment is sponsored in the United States by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and is conducted by [contractor's name and location]. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0755. We hope you will participate in this voluntary study so that the United States has a representative sample of schools across the country. NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279, Section 153). By law, the data provided by your school, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Public Law 107-279, Section 183 and Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347)). We will only disclose the names of schools to the governing district for each school, and we require that each district maintain the confidentiality of the sampled schools in the PISA field test. Reports of the findings from the field test will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

Within the next few days, a representative of [contractor's name] will call you to discuss your participation in the field test. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the PISA field test or your school's participation, please feel free to call 1-888-XXX-XXXX or send an email to [contractor's email]. You may also get more information about these studies by contacting [researcher's name] at NCES at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or visiting the PISA website at: <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/>.

Thank you for your time and support for this effort to benchmark the performance and progress of our students against international standards.

Sincerely,

Stuart Kerachsky  
Deputy Commissioner  
Enclosures

## **Frequently Asked Questions Program for International Student Assessment FIELD TEST 2011**

### **What is the field test for?**

Field Tests are a critical part of the development of test questions for international assessments. Field Tests (small-scale, trial runs of an assessment) allow assessment developers to try out new questions to determine how they work when administered to students around the world. It is important to make sure that any questions used in an international assessment accurately and fairly measure students' knowledge and skills in all participating countries. The results of the U.S. Field Test will help assessment developers to eliminate wording or topics that would put U.S. students at a disadvantage in answering relative to students in other countries. The Field Test is also designed to provide valuable information about ways to reduce the time and effort required of schools and students to participate in the assessment.

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

Schools of varying demographics and locations were randomly selected so that the overall U.S. field test sample is representative of the overall U.S. school population. The random selection process is important for ensuring that a country's sample accurately reflects its schools and therefore can fairly be compared with samples of schools from other countries.

### **Is it possible that my school will be selected for the main study as well as the field test?**

No. Schools selected for the 2011 field test will not be selected for the 2012 main study.

### **Will all of our 15-year-old students be asked to participate?**

Probably not. Only students who are randomly selected will be asked to participate and only in very small schools will this include all 15-year-olds. In addition, some students with special needs or limited English proficiency may be excused from the assessment.

### **Who conducts the field test assessment?**

The entire assessment process will be undertaken by trained staff from [contractor's name], a research organization under contract to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). NCES conducts this study under authorization in the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279, Section 153) and approval of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget under OMB # 1850-0755.

### **Do teachers need to help administer the field test assessment?**

No. [contractor's name] staff will visit the school on the day of the assessment, bringing with them all the materials required, and they will handle the entire administration of the assessment.



### **When will the field test be conducted?**

The field test will be conducted between March 1 and May 15, 2011. [contractor's name] will work with schools to identify an assessment date convenient for the school in that time period.

### **Where will the field test be conducted?**

The field test will be conducted in the schools that are selected to participate.

### **How long does the field test take?**

The field test consists of two sessions. The first session is approximately 3 hours; it includes time for instructions, the administration of the paper-and-pencil assessment, and a brief questionnaire that students complete about themselves. The questionnaire takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. The second session is administered on computer; only some of the students who took the paper-based assessment will participate in the approximately 1 hour session, which includes time for instructions and 40 minutes to complete the assessment.

### **What will happen with the collected data?**

The field test data will be used to evaluate whether the assessment accurately and fairly measures students' knowledge and skills in all participating countries. By law, the data provided by schools, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Public Law 107-279, Section 183 and Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347)). Reports of the findings from the field test will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

### **Are schools required by federal law to participate?**

No. School participation is voluntary. However, we hope you will participate in this study so that students like those in your school are accurately and fairly represented.

### **What do school staff and students do?**

Schools are asked to designate a *School Coordinator* to assist [contractor's name] staff members with in-school arrangements.

The school principal or lead administrator will receive a School Questionnaire to complete. The questionnaire, which asks about the school environment and structure, takes about 30 minutes to complete.

Students will attend the assessment session(s) and will be asked to complete the assessment booklet, questionnaire, and if applicable, the computer-based assessment. Those who do will receive compensation.

**Summary of Activities for School Coordinators  
Program for International Student Assessment  
FIELD TEST 2011**

**What will be asked of the school coordinator?**

***Upon the school's agreement to participate***, [contractor's name] staff will work with the school coordinator to:

Schedule the assessment. A [contractor's name] staff member will contact the school coordinator to schedule a convenient date between March 1 and May 15, 2011. The coordinator will need to arrange the use of a classroom or an alternative quiet space for the assessment.

Review parent notification procedures. If your school requires parental permission to conduct the assessment, the [contractor's name] staff member will review these procedures with the school coordinator.

Provide a list of age-eligible students. The school coordinator will receive instructions for preparing and submitting a list of students. Students from the list will be selected randomly to participate.

**All student names will be kept confidential and will never be linked to assessment booklets or results. Individual student responses or scores are NEVER reported or distributed.**

***Closer to the assessment date***, the school coordinator will be asked to:

Work with a [contractor's name] staff member to identify those students with special needs or limited English proficiency that preclude them from participating in the assessment.

Notify parents, teachers, and students. Once the students have been selected, a [contractor's name] staff member will work with the school coordinator on procedures for notifying parents, teachers, and students of the study and the benefits of participating.

Receive the School Questionnaire. The school coordinator will be mailed the School Questionnaire and asked to distribute it to the school principal. The Coordinator should also retrieve the questionnaire and return it to the [contractor's name] staff member on assessment day.

Confirm the assessment information. At least 2 weeks before the assessment, a [contractor's name] staff member will contact the school coordinator to confirm the date and location of the assessment.

***On assessment day***, the school coordinator will be asked to:

Ensure that all sampled students attend the assessment session. While it is not necessary for the school coordinator to be present during the session, the school coordinator should be available before the assessment to help locate selected students and ensure participation. **It is very important that student attendance rates be as high as possible** to avoid the

#### PISA Draft Brochure - Field Test

Please feel free to contact the PISA U.S. Home Office with any questions via e-mail at [contractor's email] or by calling 1-800-XXX-XXXX

### **What is PISA?**

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international assessment of 15-year-olds. In 2012, students from more than 60 countries including the United States will participate. PISA measures how well students apply their knowledge and skills in reading, mathematics, and science to problems within a real-life context. Additionally, PISA 2012 will include computer-based assessments in mathematics, reading, and general problem solving, and an assessment of students' financial literacy.

PISA is sponsored by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and managed in the United States by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education.

### **Why is PISA important?**

PISA provides a unique opportunity to compare 15-year-old U.S. students' reading, math, and science knowledge and skills with those of peers in countries around the world. PISA complements what we learn from national assessments by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of student performance internationally. The results inform national discussions about education as well as international competitiveness.

PISA also compares U.S. student performance over time and across different segments of the U.S. student population. PISA examines relationships between student performance and schooling across countries to suggest national strengths and weaknesses.

### **What is the purpose of the PISA Field Test?**

PISA conducts a field test (a small-scale, trial run of the assessment) in every participating country to see if any of its test items are biased because of national, social, or cultural differences. Statistical analyses of student answers are also conducted to check for evidence of differences in student performance across countries that could indicate a linguistic or conceptual translation problem. Test questions that are found to be problematic are dropped from the assessment or treated differently in the analysis.

In the spring of 2011, the United States will participate in the PISA field study to test the viability of new test questions and procedures to be used in PISA 2012. The field test will ensure a fair assessment for U.S. students and also provide valuable information about ways to reduce the time and effort required of schools and students to participate in PISA.

### **What will students be asked to do?**

The field test consists of two sessions. The first session is approximately three hours and includes time for instructions, the administration of a paper-and-pencil assessment, and a brief questionnaire that students complete about themselves. The second session is administered on a computer and only some of the students will also participate in this approximately one-hour session. Participation is voluntary but important for ensuring that the sample is representative of schools and students across the country.

### **What type of assessment is PISA?**

The PISA assessments are developed through an international consensus-building process involving input from U.S. and international experts in reading, mathematics, science, and financial literacy and measurement. In a final step, the assessment is endorsed as suitable by all participating countries. The assessment contains a mix of questions: some require students to select appropriate responses, while others require that students solve problems and provide written answers. Examples of PISA reading, mathematics, and science assessment questions are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/educators.asp>.

## What Countries are participating in PISA 2012?

### OECD Countries

Australia	Austria	Belgium
Canada	Czech Republic	Denmark
Finland	France	Germany
Greece	Hungary	Iceland
Ireland	Italy	Japan
Republic of Korea	Luxembourg	Mexico
The Netherlands	New Zealand	Norway
Poland	Portugal	Slovak Republic
Spain	Sweden	Switzerland
Turkey	United States	United Kingdom

### Non-OECD Countries

Albania	Argentina	Azerbaijan
Brazil	Bulgaria	Chile
Colombia	Croatia	Dubai (UAE)
Estonia	Hong Kong-China	Indonesia
Israel	Jordan	Kazakhstan
Kyrgyz Republic	Liechtenstein	Lithuania
Latvia	Macao-China	Republic of Montenegro
Panama	Peru	Qatar
Romania	Russian Federation	Republic of Serbia
Shanghai (China)	Singapore	Slovenia
Chinese Taipei	Thailand	Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia	Uruguay	

## What organizations have endorsed PISA 2012?

The following organizations support U.S. participation in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2012 as a means of assessing and comparing the reading, mathematics, and science skills of the U.S. 15-year old students with those of students from other countries.

American Association of School Administrators  
 American Federation of Teachers  
 Council for American Private Education  
 Council of Chief State School Officers  
 Council of Great City Schools  
 International Reading Association  
 National Association of Secondary School Principals  
 National Association of State Boards of Education  
 National Association of Test Directors

National Catholic Education Association, Department of Secondary Schools  
National Christian School Association  
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics  
National High School Association  
National Middle School Association

### **How do I get more information?**

Visit the PISA website:  
<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa>

For additional questions about PISA 2012, contact the PISA Information Hotline at 1-888-xxx-xxxx or email to [contractor's email]

**PISA logo here**

**IES/NCES logo here**



NCES is authorized to conduct PISA under Section 153, of Public Law 107-279. Information collected will help the U.S. Department of Education's ongoing efforts to benchmark student achievement in the United States. Participation is voluntary. Data collected may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347) and Section 183, Public Law 107-279). Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved this data collection under OMB # 1850-0755.