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**MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** Shelly Wilkie Martinez, OMB  
**FROM:** Freddie Cross and Kathryn Chandler, NCES  
**SUBJECT:** Informed Consent – response to OMB# 1850-0868 v.1 Terms of Clearance for BTLS  
**DATE:** December 10, 2010  
**THROUGH:** Kashka Kubzdela, NCES

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This memo is in response to OMB’s terms of clearance for the 2009-10 Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study (BTLS), approved on October 20, 2009, under OMB# 1850-0868 v.1, which requested NCES to research alternate methods for obtaining informed consent in longitudinal surveys. Several longitudinal surveys and their methods of gaining informed consent are discussed below. The steps taken for the 2009-10 BTLS are examined within this context, and recommendations for changes are outlined.

**Elements of Informed Consent**

In survey research, informed consent is participants’ voluntary agreement to be part of a study based upon a clear appreciation and understanding of the nature of the research, their responsibilities and risks, and implications and future consequences of their involvement. Informed consent is also often related to the confidentiality of the information supplied by the participants. The Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. § 552a, Public Law No. 93-579, (Dec. 31, 1974) is one law that governs the collection, maintenance, use, and dissemination of personally identifiable information about individuals that is maintained in systems of records by federal agencies. The Privacy Act requires that agencies give the public notice of their systems of records by publication in the Federal Register. The Privacy Act prohibits the disclosure of information from a system of records absent the written consent of the subject individual, unless the disclosure is pursuant to one of twelve statutory exceptions. The Act also provides individuals with a means by which to seek access to and amend their records and sets forth various agency record-keeping requirements. The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002) applies to BTLS, and prohibits revealing individually identifiable information about students, their families, and their schools.

The requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act are reiterated in the government-wide Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys (2006) issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). It explicitly requires survey programs to make respondents aware of the “planned uses” of the data they submit. It says in Standard 2.2: “Agencies must ensure that each collection of information instrument clearly states the reasons the information is planned to be collected; the way such information is planned to be used to further the proper performance of the functions of the agency; whether responses to the collection of information are voluntary or mandatory (citing authority); the nature and extent of confidentiality to be provided, if any (citing authority); an estimate of the average respondent burden together with a request that the public direct to the agency any comments concerning the accuracy of this burden estimate and any suggestions for reducing this burden; the OMB control number; and a statement that an agency may not conduct and a person is not required to respond to an information collection request unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.”

## **Longitudinal Surveys and Consent**

A fully informed consent is difficult to achieve, especially in longitudinal surveys (O'Neill, 2003). The scope of the study is not always fully known at the beginning of the survey; researchers may not want to 'put off' participants or cause behavior change by giving too much information; and sometimes the complexity of the longitudinal surveys makes it impossible to ensure that every sample member has understood every aspect of the research project. It should be noted that based on the information publically available, the only study noted below that mentions the length of the study suffered a 50 percent recruitment rate. However, it is agreed that participants should be informed of the key aspects and should be able to request further information if desired.

Below are some examples of informed consent measures used in other longitudinal surveys. Some of them are NCES surveys and others are sponsored by different agencies inside or outside of the US. It is apparent that due to the lack of standards for informed consent in longitudinal surveys, the methods taken to inform the participants vary greatly. Furthermore, there appears to be a difference in the U.S. between the amount of information posted publically online and what is included in direct communication materials to potential respondents (letters, study brochures, etc.). Appendix I presents the language used in some of the surveys to inform participants about the use of data, confidentiality, the voluntary nature of the survey, and the length of the survey.

### ***NCES high school longitudinal surveys***

1. *High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs:09)*, is a nationally representative, longitudinal study of more than 23,000 9th graders in 944 schools who will be followed through their secondary and postsecondary years. The study focuses on understanding students' trajectories from the beginning of high school into postsecondary education or the workforce and beyond. HSLs:09 sent study brochures to parents, states, districts, schools, and students, explaining the purpose and the voluntary nature of the study and the planned use of the data. Information about the sponsoring agency was listed on the Parent Implied Consent/Active Consent letter. Information about confidentiality was also available on the letter, as well as on the School Administrator Survey Letter and parent questionnaire. The Parent Implied Consent/Active Consent letter indicates that HSLs:09 "is longitudinal, meaning it will follow the same students as they progress through school and eventually enter the work force and/or go to college. In two years, we would like to contact your teenager again for a follow-up study, so we will ask for his/her address and telephone number and those of a relative or close friend. Transcript data of coursework and grades will also be collected from the school." The brochure states that HSLs:09 "is longitudinal – the same students will be followed over time, regardless of the path they take" and that "the first follow-up will take place in the spring of 2012." In addition to survey responses, additional data are collected from State administrative records for each participating student (contingent upon agreements with each State). State officials and data personnel were contacted early to gain their cooperation and to determine the requirements for collecting the State records. To comply with the privacy and data security regulations of individual States, NCES entered into a binding agreement with each State that identifies the specific data items requested and documents the security procedures to protect the data.
2. *Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002)* follows a nationally representative cohort of students from the time they were high school sophomores through the rest of their

high school careers and into postsecondary education and/or the labor market. The study enables researchers to understand the ways in which earlier achievements, aspirations and experience influence what happens to students later. The initial student recruitment letter addressed to parents and containing a parent consent form stated: “An important feature of this study is that it is longitudinal – that is, it follows the same students as they progress through school and eventually enter the work force and/or go to college. In two years, we would like to contact your child again for a follow-up study, so we will ask your child for his/her address and telephone number and those of a relative or close friend. In order to determine what courses your child has completed, we also would like to obtain a copy of his/her high school transcript from the school.” The study brochure similarly stated that “The study will examine students’ education experiences and achievement gains in the later years of high school and the impact of high school on their future education and their careers.” that “The first follow-up data collection for this study will occur in the spring of 2004.” and that “survey administrator will visit the school sometime between January and April 2002. A follow-up with students and school administrators will be done in the spring of 2004. In 2004, we will ask the schools to provide student transcripts. Future follow-ups with students after 2004 are also planned.” The ELS website currently mentions that students were originally contacted in 2002, with follow-ups in 2004 and 2006, and will be contacted again in 2012.

### ***Postsecondary NCES longitudinal surveys***

1. *Beginning Postsecondary Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/09)*, follows several cohorts of students who enroll in postsecondary education for the first time. The study collects data on student persistence in and completion of postsecondary education programs, their transition to employment, demographic characteristics, and changes over time in their goals, marital status, income, and debt, among other indicators. BPS cohorts are drawn from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS). The third cohort (BPS:04/09) has about 19,000 students chosen from the 2004 NPSAS, with follow-ups conducted in 2006 and 2009. BPS: 04/09 first sent initial contact letters to parents, prior BPS respondents and non-respondents, which included information about the sponsoring agency, the voluntary nature of the study, the planned use of the data, and data confidentiality, but no mention of the follow-up survey that was to be conducted. Then BPS: 04/09 sent out a Data Collection Announcement Letter together with an information brochure to parents and students, providing similar information. Appendix I includes the informed consent from the 2011-12 NPSAS. BPS:04/09 also obtained additional data from a variety of administrative data sources, including the Central Processing System (CPS), the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS), Pell loan and grant files, the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), the College Board Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and American College Testing (ACT).
2. *Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B)*, is a survey of individuals who earned their bachelor’s degree during the 2007-2008 academic year. A group of approximately 19,000 sample members answered the survey in 2009 and will be followed-up in 2012. This longitudinal study will collect information about these graduates’ postsecondary education, employment, and other life experiences since leaving college. B&B sent out letters to participants, together with a study brochure, and explained the purpose of the study, the sponsoring agency, data confidentiality, the voluntary nature of the study, and two ways to participate in the study. The brochure also stated that the respondents would be contacted again in 2012 for another follow-up. B&B also has a website giving more detailed information about the

study, including a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section. The website also shares selected findings from the previous B&B studies. The student letter and study brochure are downloadable at [https://edsurveys.rti.org/bb\\_student/pages/about.aspx](https://edsurveys.rti.org/bb_student/pages/about.aspx).

### **Other longitudinal surveys**

1. *The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2)*, began in 2001 by the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences (IES), is a follow-up of the original National Longitudinal Transition Study. NLTS2 includes 12,000 youth nationwide who were ages 13 through 16 at the start of the study (2000). NLTS2 has a FAQs page on its website, which includes questions related to the goals of the study, data collection activities, and data confidentiality. It also has different web pages for the parents, the youth, and the educators (schools). Additionally, a brochure is mailed with the school program survey (we were not able to locate the actual brochure containing informed consent statements used in the survey). However, on the website, the background information about the survey and how confidentiality will be protected are explained in the FAQs section (<http://www.nlts2.org/faq.html>).
2. *National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97)* was conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and consisted of a nationally representative sample of approximately 9,000 youths who were 12 to 16 years old as of December 31, 1996. The process of contacting potential NLSY97 respondents began with sending an advance letter several weeks before interviews were scheduled. The advance letter served the following purposes: informing respondents that an interviewer will be contacting them soon; thanking respondents for their previous participation and encouraging them to participate in the upcoming round; reminding respondents that their participation is voluntary; and explaining how much time the interview is expected to take, how the data will be used, and how respondents' confidentiality will be protected by including a required privacy and disclosure statement on the reverse side of the letter. The letter did not indicate the length of the study. In addition to OMB review, the NLSY97 was reviewed and approved by the institutional review boards (IRBs) at the institutions that manage and conduct the surveys under contract with BLS. A sample advance letter is available at the website (<http://www.nlsinfo.org/nlsy97/nlsdocs/nlsy97/97sample/confidential.html>).
3. *Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* is conducted in partnership between the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). This study has a website providing information to participants, including the goal of the study, research topics, project timeline, and FAQs. It provides a link for participants to update their contact information. The study also produced flyers, posters, and brochures (for each wave) to inform participants. They are downloadable from the site (<http://aifs.gov.au/growingup/pubs/brochures/index.html>). The initial study brochure stated that "The first data collection is planned to start in early 2004 (preceded by a pilot study in 2003). Families will be contacted again in 2005 to fill out mail-back questionnaires. Interviewers will visit families again in 2006, 2008 and 2010. It is not yet known whether the study will proceed beyond this point." However, it should also be noted that the technical publication on the study reveals a mere 50 percent recruitment rate for wave one (Solof, Lawrence, Misson, and Johnstone, 2006).

4. *UK Millennium Cohort Study (MCS)* is the latest in the line of British birth cohort studies. It resembles its predecessors which follow people born in 1946, 1958, and 1970 with the intention to become a multi-purpose longitudinal data resource charting many aspects of individual's lives over time. It is conducted by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS), following the lives of a sample of about 19,000 babies born in the UK in the year 2000/2001. In the MCS, families first learn about the study in a letter accompanied by an information leaflet from the Department of Social Security (now Department for Work and Pensions) asking them to indicate if they do not want their address passed on to the survey team. Informed consent to participate in the MCS first survey is obtained orally at a preliminary visit by the interviewer. Those who have not opted-out are given further information and another information sheet by the interviewer, who proceeds to arrange an interview if they opt-in at this stage. At the end of the visit, interviewers ask the mother to carefully read a form requesting: 1) to access information about her “pregnancy and the baby's birth from birth registration, clinical, central, or hospital records” and 2) to “follow her baby's National Health Service registration where necessary.” It also contains an explanation of the linkages proposed, an assurance of confidentiality, and the uses to which the information would be put. Interviewers read this consent form to any respondents who are not able to read it for themselves and the form is provided in several languages. If mothers are willing to give one or both permissions, they are asked to sign and date the form (we were not able to locate the actual information leaflet and other informed consent documents used in the survey).

In comparison, NCES has taken the following measures to ensure informed consent for the BTLS. All sample members have received a letter informing them that they are in the study sample, followed by another letter and an e-mail with their username and password to access the BTLS survey. Both letters are accompanied by a study brochure, prepared by NCES, that informs the sample members that they will be followed for a decade. It provides information about the sponsoring agency of the BTLS, the goal of the survey, possible research questions, the importance of their voluntary participation, sample selection method, data collection process, and the confidentiality of the data. Participants are also given the BTLS website address and NCES contact information if they would like to know more about the survey. The study brochure is also posted on the BTLS website. In the BTLS, participants are asked to give consent to track them by updating their own contact information and contact information of two additional people who can help locate them in the future (as is a common practice in other NCES longitudinal studies).

### **Issues Relevant to BTLS**

Because of the repeated waves, longitudinal surveys face additional challenges compared with cross-sectional surveys in obtaining informed consent (Stolt, Helgesson, Liss, Svensson, and Ludvigsson, 2005). In light of the federal regulations and the nature of BTLS, the following three issues are the most relevant to the implementation of the BTLS: 1) how to inform participants of the nature of the research and the use of the data collected, 2) how to guarantee free choice in participation, and 3) how to protect participants' confidentiality. Appendix II contains the language that was cognitively tested. The cognitive interviews findings and the issues discussed here have led to proposed revisions to the respondent contact materials developed for the future waves of BTLS.

1. *Informing participants of the nature of the study and the use of the data*

Informing participants about a longitudinal survey is an ongoing task. As suggested by Lessof (2009), initial consent to participate can only be considered as valid for the first wave of the study. Therefore continuing consent should be obtained for every additional wave. Additional consent will also be needed if the scope of the study is expanded or unanticipated activities and analyses are added at a later stage. When researchers or investigators want to link administrative data to the survey data, consent for linkage may also be needed (Duncan, Jabine, and de Wolf, 1993). However, it is important to note that there are instances when the law permits the use of administrative records with personally identifiable information (PII) without consent, as well as instances when administrative data are part of a public record. Consent for linkage would not be needed in either of these two instances.

2. *Free choice in participation*

For longitudinal studies it is important to keep all participants throughout the waves. However, because the participation in BTLS is voluntary, in cases where people opt-out, an invitation for rejoining the study needs to be carefully planned so that it will not be perceived as coercion. Free choice also implies the option to participate (Lessof, 2009). Effort needs to be made to provide enough opportunities for sample members to participate. Additionally, when a participant withdraws, that person is entitled to an explanation of what happens to the data previously collected.

3. *Confidentiality and the use of data*

The third issue related to the informed consent for a longitudinal survey is the participants' confidentiality. Due to the repeated waves of the survey, it is possible that certain participants can be identified through the combination of data across different waves. Tight controls on disclosure risk are therefore needed (Mackie and Bradburn, 2000). In addition, giving participants adequate information on how privacy and confidentiality will be protected may increase their cooperation (Mayer, 2002).

## **Recommendations for Changes**

Based on the discussion above, the following recommendations have been suggested for wave 4 of the BTLS on informed consent measures. Recommendations 1 to 4 have been implemented (see the attached revised materials):

1) Update the BTLS brochure to include:

- a) the sponsoring agency for the survey and data collection agency
  - *This survey is authorized by Title I, Part E, Sections 151(b) and 153(a) of Public Law 107-279, the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. The U.S. Census Bureau is conducting this survey for The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education.*
- b) OMB approval number
- c) additional changes to the text to clarify some details:
  - *How are the data collected?*  
*The data will be collected through a web-based questionnaire every year for about a decade. At the beginning of each data collection, you will receive e-mails from NCES containing a username, password, and link to the questionnaire.*
  - *Do the data remain confidential?*

*All responses are protected by Public Law 107-279, the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183. Your answers will be used for statistical purposes only and will not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as provided by law. Your responses to the survey are stored on a secure server, at the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education (deleting the phrase “much like using PayPal™”).*

- *How will your information be reported?  
The information you provide will be combined with the information provided by others in statistical reports. No individually-identifiable data will be included in the statistical reports.*

d) description of BTLS wave 4

- *The fourth interview  
While some questionnaire items have been revised, the fourth interview is similar to the previous one. It is important that we hear from you in order to understand when life transitions happen and how they affect your career paths. We would really appreciate your support for each wave of the study.*

2) Update BTLS website to include any changes made to the BTLS brochure.

3) Add more information about confidentiality and data use to the BTLS website.

- *Will your responses be kept confidential?  
All responses are protected by Public Law 107-279, the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183. Your answers may be used for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as provided by law. Your responses to the survey are stored on a secure server, at the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. Some of your answers, without any direct personal identifiers such as names, addresses, or any other contact information, will be made available to researchers at government agencies, universities, and private research organizations through restricted-use data files after those researchers go through a thorough licensing process at NCES that allows NCES to treat the researcher as an agent of NCES. Each agent/licensee must sign a legally binding agreement to protect the confidentiality of all individually identifiable survey answers. The restricted user data files do not contain direct personal identifiers such as names, addresses, or any other contact information.*

4) Contact sample members who did not participate in wave 2 or wave 3 to invite them back to the study. If they refuse two times, then NCES will not pursue them in subsequent waves.

5) During June and July, 2010, Macro International, Inc. was contracted by the U.S. Census Bureau to conduct cognitive interviews by phone from their offices in Calverton, MD, to test survey items and the informed consent language that would be used during the data collection (please see Appendix II). Along with each of the three different surveys tested (Movers, Leavers, and Returners), former and current teachers reviewed the informed consent language. The goal was to examine whether the language is successful in conveying:

- The purpose of the study;
- The sponsoring agency and collecting agency;
- The voluntary nature of the study;
- The nature and extent of data confidentiality;
- The planned use of the data; and

- The average respondent burden.

The cognitive lab testing results (Appendix II) showed that all respondents were able to state correctly the voluntary nature of the study and the time needed to complete the study. Almost all of them also understood the language explaining the purpose of the study and the data confidentiality in the informed consent. However, most of the respondents couldn't correctly answer the sponsoring agency and collecting agency. A few respondents also required further information on the use of the data. Consequently, the informed consent text was revised to clearly state the two agencies and adding more information on data usage. The revised informed consent text is included in Appendix III.

## References

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## Appendix I - Informed Consent Language from Contacting Materials of Selected Longitudinal Surveys

Survey	Use of data	Confidentiality	Voluntary nature of the collection	Length of the collection
High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs:09)	HSLs:09 data will allow researchers, educators, and policymakers to examine motivation, achievement, and persistence in high school course taking, and entry into careers (either directly or by way of postsecondary education). More generally, HSLs:09 data will allow researchers to examine changes in young people's lives and the influence of communities, schools, teachers, families, parents, and friends on student transitions, progress, and outcomes.	Student, parent, and staff answers may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (Public Law 107-279, Section 183). School and student participation is voluntary, and we hope all selected districts and schools will choose to contribute to the study. The data collected will be used in analyses to understand students' course taking behaviors, motivation and achievement, and how students decide what to do after high school.	Participation is voluntary, but participation is important to ensure the completeness and accuracy of the results. Development of valid national results depends on a high rate of participation.	Initial data collection will occur in the fall of 2009. The first follow-up will take place in the spring of 2012.
2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study	NPSAS is the primary source of data that has been used to identify problems and propose changes in the Federal Pell Grant Program, the Federal Stafford Student Loan Programs, the Federal Education Tax Credits, and the Federal Need Analysis	<p>NCES is required to follow strict procedures to protect the confidentiality of persons in the collection, reporting, and publication of data. All individually identifiable information supplied by individuals or institutions to a federal agency may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed or used in identifiable form for any other purpose, unless otherwise compelled by law (20 U.S.C. § 9573). NCES adheres to the guidelines issued by the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA) of 2002 for ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of data collected for statistical purposes.</p> <p><b>Protection of electronic files</b> All electronic files from institution records and student interviews will be carefully protected. Computer accounts used to access data will be password protected with multilevel access controls to ensure that only those individuals with a need to access confidential information are allowed access to it. For the web-based data collection, proven methods of protection for online sessions and data security over the Internet will be used. Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) protocol will be used to encrypt the data over the Internet. All of the data entry modules on this site will be password protected, which will require the user to log in to the site before accessing confidential data. The system will automatically log the user out after 30 minutes of inactivity on the session, which will prevent unauthorized user access to the site.</p> <p><b>Protection of paper records</b> All paper records will be maintained in locked storage cabinets. A unique study identification variable (not the Social Security Number or school ID) will be created and maintained for each survey participant to protect against disclosure of confidential data.</p> <p><b>Preparation of data for public release</b> All data released to the general public (for example, statistical tables) will be designed so that it will not be possible to identify specific individuals.</p> <p><b>Penalties for Disclosure of confidential Data</b> All personnel with access to individual data will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement and an affidavit of nondisclosure. Anyone who violates the confidentiality provisions of the act when using the data shall be found guilty of a Class E felony and can be imprisoned up to 5 years, and/or fined up to \$250,000.</p>		

Survey	Use of data	Confidentiality	Voluntary nature of the collection	Length of the collection
The Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study	Your responses will be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose, except as required by law.	<p>Will my answers be kept confidential?            Yes, federal law requires that we protect your privacy. Your responses will be used only for statistical purposes and will not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose, except as required by law.            Confidentiality procedures are reviewed and approved by RTI's Institutional Review Board in the Office of Research Protection. Your answers are secured behind firewalls and are encrypted during internet transmission using Secure Socket Layer (SSL) protocol.            All data entry modules are password protected and require the user to log in before accessing confidential data. Project staff may be severely fined or imprisoned for disclosure of individual responses.</p>	Although participation in this study is voluntary, there is no substitute for your responses.	Beginning in the summer of 2009, students who completed requirements for their bachelor's degrees during the 2007-08 academic year will be contacted to complete B&B online. B&B participants will be interviewed for the second follow-up in 2012.
National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2)		<p>All information collected for the study is completely confidential, and the results of the study disclose information about any individual child, school, or school district. The Director of the Family Policy Compliance Office of the U.S. Department of Education authorizes school districts to provide student information to SRI International under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The NLTS2 study is authorized to collect data under law 20 U.S.C. 123g; 34 CFR Part 99. School personnel are permitted to disclose to the study information contained in students' education records without fear of violating FERPA because SRI International is acting as an authorized representative of the U.S. Department of Education.</p> <p>Yes. All information collected as part of NLTS2 is completely confidential. Study reports will report only group summary data.</p>		Information will be collected over 10 years from parents, youth, and schools and will provide a national picture of the experiences and achievements of young people as they transition into early adulthood.
National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97)		<p>We want to reassure you that your confidentiality is protected by law. In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002, the Privacy Act, and other applicable Federal laws, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, its employees and agents, will, to the full extent permitted by law, use the information you provide for statistical purposes only, will hold your responses in confidence, and will not disclose them in identifiable form without your informed consent. All the employees who work on the survey at the Bureau of Labor Statistics and its contractors must sign a document agreeing to protect the confidentiality of your data. In fact, only a few people have access to information about your identity because they need that information to carry out their job duties.</p> <p>Some of your answers will be made available to researchers at the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other government agencies, universities, and private research organizations through publicly available data files. These publicly available files contain no personal identifiers, such as names, addresses, Social Security numbers, and places of work, and exclude any information about the States, counties, metropolitan areas, and other, more detailed geographic locations in which survey participants live, making it much more difficult to figure out the identities of participants. Some researchers are granted special access to data files that include geographic information, but only after those researchers go through a thorough application process at the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Those authorized researchers must sign a written agreement making them official agents of the Bureau of Labor Statistics and requiring them to protect the confidentiality of survey participants. Those researchers are never provided with the personal identities of participants. The National Archives and Records Administration and the General Services Administration may receive copies of survey data and materials because those agencies are responsible for storing the Nation's historical documents.</p>	This is a voluntary study, and there are no penalties for not answering questions.	

Survey	Use of data	Confidentiality	Voluntary nature of the collection	Length of the collection
<p>Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children</p>	<p>The information collected in the study will help government policy makers plan for future policies and services that will benefit families and their children. This will help to ensure that all Australian children will have the best possible start in life. Data from Growing Up in Australia will be warehoused at the Australian Institute of Family Studies, and will be widely available to researchers who abide by strict security and confidentiality protocols. The release of the first wave of data is planned for early 2005. The Institute will provide user support services to those who wish to analyze the data.</p>	<p>Your privacy is important to us and only the combined results from everyone in the study will be discussed and published. Any information you provide will remain absolutely confidential – it will never be used in any way that identifies you, or your child or family. Strict procedures are followed to ensure that only authorized people have access to your information, and all the interviewers, researchers and others involved must comply with the Privacy Act 1988.</p>	<p>Your participation in any aspect of the study is voluntary and you can leave the study at any time – although of course we hope you stay with us!</p>	<p>The study will follow 5,000 babies and 5,000 four year olds and their families for seven years. The first data collection is planned to start in early 2004 (preceded by a pilot study in 2003). Families will be contacted again in 2005 to fill out mail-back questionnaires. Interviewers will visit families again in 2006, 2008 and 2010. It is not yet known whether the study will proceed beyond this point.</p>

## **Appendix II - Cognitive Lab Testing: BTLS Fourth Wave Informed Consent Language**

Instructions: *Please let the teachers read the entire text on page 1 before asking the questions on page 2. The purpose is to determine how clear the informed consent form is and whether or not it needs to be improved.*

*After teachers are done with the questions, ask them:*

- 1) How easy or difficult was it to answer these questions?*
- 2) Are there terms or phrases in the text that are difficult to understand?*
- 3) Is there information that the participants would like to know but is not presented in the form?*

(Page 1)

## **Thank you for being a part of the Study!**

### **What is the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study?**

The Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study (BTLS) is a study of a group of public school teachers who began teaching in 2007 or 2008. The study will follow this cohort of teachers for a decade to create an unfolding “story.” Over time, the information gathered will permit a better understanding of the impact that different life events have on teachers’ careers and how teachers respond to transitions in their lives.

This survey is authorized by Title I, Part E, Sections 151(b) and 153(a) of Public Law 107-279, the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. The U.S. Census Bureau is conducting this survey for The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1850-0868.

### **How are the data collected?**

The data will be collected through a web-based questionnaire every year for about a decade, beginning in the 2007-08 school year. At the beginning of each data collection, you will receive e-mails from NCES containing a username, password, and link to the questionnaire. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to be 20 minutes, on average, including the time spent to review instructions, search existing data sources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection.

### **Does data remain confidential?**

All responses are protected by Public Law 107-279, the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183. Your answers will be used for statistical purposes only and will not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as provided by law. Your responses to the survey are stored on a secure server, at the National Center for Education Statistics,

U.S. Department of Education

**How will your information be reported?**

The information you provide will be combined with the information provided by others in statistical reports. No individually-identifiable data will be included in the statistical reports. Please know that your participation is completely voluntary. However, we hope you will want to be part of this important and exciting study.

**Where do I get more information?**

To obtain additional information, go to <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/btls>

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Questions:

1. What is the purpose of the study?
2. Which agency is sponsoring the study?
3. Which agency is collecting data from participants?
4. Is the study voluntary?
5. How can a person remove himself/herself from the study?
6. How long does it take, on average, to complete the survey?
7. How will the data be used?
8. What is your understanding of data confidentiality?

### Cognitive Testing Results of BTLS Informed Consent Document

Question	Responses (responses in <b>bold</b> represent most correct answer)
If you wanted to get more information about this study, how would you go about doing so?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Go to the website (14/15)<sup>1</sup></b></li> <li>• Contact Ms. Cross (1/15)</li> </ul>
What is the purpose of the study?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Track teachers over time to see how they respond to transitions (13/15)</b></li> <li>• Understand why teachers leave teaching (1/15)</li> <li>• Understand why teachers switch schools (1/15)</li> </ul>
Which government agency is sponsoring the study?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ED and/or NCES (7/17)</b></li> <li>• Census Bureau (6/17)</li> <li>• Census Bureau and ED/NCES (4/17)</li> </ul>
Which government agency is collecting data from participants?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ED and/or NCES (11/17)</li> <li>• <b>Census Bureau (4/17)</b></li> <li>• Census Bureau and ED/NCES (2/17)</li> </ul>
Is the study voluntary?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes (17/17)</b></li> </ul>
If someone doesn't want to participate, how can he/she remove himself/herself from the study?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Contact Ms. Cross (17/17)</b></li> </ul>
How long does it take to complete the survey on average?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>20 minutes (17/17)</b></li> </ul>
How will the data be used?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To develop statistical reports (16/17)</b></li> <li>• It doesn't really say... (1/17)</li> </ul>
What is your understanding of data confidentiality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Data will not be linked to me (16/17)</b></li> <li>• No personally identifiable data is collected (1/17)</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> The first two questions in this list were only asked of 15 of the 17 respondents.

## Appendix III - BTLS Fourth Wave Informed Consent Language (revised)

# Thank you for being a part of the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study!

The Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study is sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Census Bureau is conducting data collection on its behalf. The purpose of the study is to collect data from a cohort of teachers over time to get a better understanding of how teachers respond to transitions in their lives.

### **How will the data be collected?**

The data will be collected through a web-based questionnaire every year for ten years, beginning in the 2007-08 school year. At the beginning of each data collection, you will receive a letter from Census and e-mails from NCES containing a username, password, and link to the questionnaire. We estimate it will take an average of 20-30 minutes for you to complete the survey each year, including the time spent reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the questionnaire.

### **How will my information be reported?**

The information you provide will be combined with data from other respondents to develop statistical reports about teachers and schools across the country. No individually-identifiable data will be included in these reports. The information you have given us so far is being used to inform policy makers about the needs of beginning teachers in the areas of professional development, education, and support. Please know that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. However, we hope you will want to be part of this important and exciting study.

### **Will my data be kept confidential?**

All responses are protected by Public Law 107-279, the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183. Your answers will be used for statistical purposes only and will not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as provided by law. Your responses to the survey are stored on a secure server at the National Center for Education Statistics.

### **Where can I get more information about this study?**

For more information, go to <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/btls>.

This survey is authorized by Title I, Part E, Sections 151(b) and 153(a) of Public Law 107-279, the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1850-0868.