

APPENDIX B
DISTRICT RECRUITMENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

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This document provides guidance on how to structure initial telephone calls with districts to recruit their participation in the study. Prior to the initial call, districts will receive the notification letter on U.S. Department of Education letterhead and a study summary.

I. Introduction

My name is _____, and I'm calling on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to discuss a study that will examine the distribution of teacher effectiveness in a group of 30 districts across the country. The study will provide valuable information about the distribution of teacher effectiveness in participating school districts. ED has contracted with my organization, Mathematica Policy Research, to conduct the study. A letter from ED inviting your district to participate in the study was recently sent to you and the superintendent.

If you have 15 minutes I would like to discuss the study and the possible participation of **District Name**, or we can schedule another time that is convenient for you.

If need to reschedule: What is a date and time that work well for you?

If agree to talk now, continue with conversation guide.

II. Study Overview

We are hoping that [District Name] will participate in this study, which will examine the distribution of teacher effectiveness in districts across the country. Your participation would help us understand a high priority issue for US education policy: whether students in the most disadvantaged schools have equal access to the most effective teachers. The study will also examine the relationship between district policies and the distribution of teacher effectiveness. Ultimately, the U.S. Department of Education hopes that the study will provide educators with valuable information on how to ensure that all students have access to good teachers.

[District Name] is among a select group of districts invited by the U.S. Department of Education to participate in the study. District Name is a good fit for this study because of your existing efforts to address teacher quality through policies/initiatives such as [mention existing policies]. [Depending on the district, can add the following: *Is this an issue that your district has identified or tried to address?*]

Do you think that [District Name] might be interested in participating?

While participating districts will not be named in study reports, by participating in the study [District Name] will receive information about the distribution of teacher effectiveness in your district that can be useful for informing policy. The study will provide insight into, how the distribution changes over time, and information on what affects teachers' decisions to move from one school to another or out of the district altogether. The study will also provide a unique opportunity to compare your distribution to other districts across the country.

We know that many districts are operating under tight budget constraints—so this study is designed to be low burden for your staff. We will gather student and teacher data from the district, and conduct interviews with district staff. The study will not require any interaction with students, teachers, or schools. Participation in the study is voluntary.

Do you have any questions about the study at this point?

It might be helpful to describe how the study works in more detail. First, we will conduct a value added analysis of teacher effectiveness in each district—this analysis isolates a teacher's contribution to student test score growth by accounting for factors outside of the teacher's control.

Next, we will use the value added measures to analyze how teacher effectiveness is distributed. For example, we will examine whether the most effective teachers (i.e. teachers with high value-added) are evenly distributed across high- and low-poverty schools. We will conduct this analysis over multiple years to document how the distribution of teacher effectiveness changes over time and relate the distribution to district policies that are designed to bring about a more equitable distribution of teachers. The study will also examine how teacher mobility and attrition are related to the distribution of teacher effectiveness. For example, are high-value added teachers more or less likely to transfer out of a high-poverty or low achieving school?

III. Study Benefits

The study provides a unique opportunity to learn about the distribution of teacher effectiveness in your district. For example, you will learn whether the most effective teachers in your district are evenly distributed across high- and low-poverty schools. This analysis will be updated each year for three years, allowing you to track how the distribution changes over time. The study will allow districts to see how their distribution compares to other districts across the country. *[Optional if district seems interested:]* This is also an opportunity for your district to pilot a value added model; and we can provide the district information about the value added model used to measure teacher effectiveness.

Do you have any questions about the study?

IV. Study Requirements

Participation in the study involves providing data that the study team will use to conduct a value-added analysis and an analysis of the distribution of teacher effectiveness. Next spring, districts will be asked to provide data on (1) student test scores for the last three years (2007-08 through 2009-10), (2) student demographic characteristics and teacher-student-course assignments for the last two school years (2008-09 and 2009-10); and (2) teacher personnel data with teacher school assignments and teacher mobility information for the last two school years (2008-09 and 2009-10). In the next three school years, participating districts will be asked to provide updated data for each subsequent school year.

The study team will also conduct telephone interviews with district staff next spring/summer to gather information on district policies related to the distribution of teacher effectiveness. This will involve three one-hour interviews with district staff who are knowledgeable about teacher hiring and transfer policies; teacher compensation and evaluation; and school improvement policies. Follow-up district interviews to learn about changes in district policies will be conducted each spring in the next two school years.

V. Next Steps

Do you have any questions about the study? Would your district be interested in learning more about the distribution of teacher effectiveness?

As a next step it would be helpful to setup an in-person meeting to provide information about the study to a broader group of district staff. Could you let me know who else should be included in discussions about the study? [*Identify relevant district staff and schedule follow-up call.*] What is the best way to schedule a meeting with these district staff, is it easiest for someone in the district to coordinate a date or for me to contact these staff?

Just so you know, I will also be following up with your data/research office to learn more about the availability of student-teacher linked data in the district and data on teacher school assignments and mobility.