

Appendix G. IRB-Approved Notification Materials

Parent Notification, Focus Group and Survey

Parent Notification, Survey Only

Teacher Invite

National Evaluation of NASA Explorer Schools

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) offers a program called NASA Explorer Schools (NES) to middle and high school teachers and their students. This program provides a variety of educational resources to science teachers, including your child's teacher. The NES program was recently redesigned and so NASA is conducting a national evaluation to measure its effectiveness. Abt Associates, and Education Development Center were hired to do a national evaluation that will include thousands of students across the country. This handout is being sent home to provide families with information about the study.

NASA is asking students to be in the evaluation if one of their teachers is using NES materials in their classroom. As part of the evaluation students in these classrooms will complete up to two surveys during the school year. In addition, a subset of students in these classrooms will be asked to participate in interviews or focus groups. Students will be asked about their attitudes, interests, and self-confidence in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), as well as how they liked the NES materials they used and how NES might have affected their attitudes and interests regarding STEM. This information will be very helpful in helping NASA further improve the NES program. Participation in the evaluation is completely voluntary and all information that we collect will be confidential and used only for research purposes.

What It Means to Participate

We need students to participate in the study because they will help identify ways to improve NES and other similar programs. Surveys will be completed in your child's classroom. Student focus groups will be during the school day or just after school, and focus group sessions will be audio recorded. However, your child's participation in the study is completely voluntary. Your child's participation will not affect whether he or she participates in any classroom activities, and your child will not have to answer any question he or she does not want to, and he or she will be informed of this just prior to participation.

Protection of Information

Protecting your child's information is very important to us. NASA Office of Education and the companies doing the study will follow strict rules to protect the information your child provides. Your child's name, and the name of your child's teacher or school, will not appear in any reports produced for this study. Your child's answers and records will be kept confidential from NES staff, NASA, your child's school staff, friends, and family. Any information on your child will be stored on a secure computer network. Paper copies of your child's survey responses will also be stored securely. We will not provide information that identifies your child to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.

As with all data collection, there is a very small chance that someone will see your child's survey answers without permission. NASA Office of Education and the study team have many procedures in place to protect the confidentiality of the data collected on your child, so we do not think this will happen. However, if it does, all NASA Office of Education procedures will be followed to correct the situation.

Questions about the Evaluation

If you have any questions about the evaluation, please feel free to contact the study director, Alina Martinez of Abt Associates Inc. at 855-646-3308 (toll free), or email at NASAEplorerSchoolsStudy@abtassoc.com. Also please feel free to Brian Yoder, Evaluation Manager at NASA (phone: (202) 358-7338 (toll call); email: brian.yoder@nasa.gov). For questions about your child's rights as a participant in this study, contact Teresa Doksum at the Abt Associates Inc. Institutional Review Board at 877-520-6835 (toll-free).

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TEACHER INVITE [Subject line: Evaluation of NASA Explorer Schools (NES)]

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is conducting a national evaluation of its redesigned NASA Explorer Schools (NES) program. Abt Associates Inc. and Education Development Center (EDC) have been hired to conduct this evaluation. Teachers and students participating in the study will help NASA understand the relationship between NES and students' interest in and understanding of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Crucially, your participation will also help to advise NASA on potential changes and improvements to the program.

We would like to invite you, as one of the teachers participating in NES this year, to take part in this study. Participation in the evaluation involves completing a monthly log and a short, online survey. The log is filled in once every month, with information about the NES resources you used during that time period. We estimate that it will take at most 10 minutes to fill out each log. The survey, which will also require about 10 minutes, is taken online at the beginning and end of the school year. It asks questions about your comfort level teaching different science topics, and your comfort and familiarity with different NES materials.

We are also interested in hearing what students think of the program. Therefore we also ask that you give a survey to your students at the beginning and end of the school year. This student survey will be administered in pencil-and-paper format, and takes about 15 minutes each time. It asks students about their attitudes, interests, and self-confidence in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

[FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH FOR FOCUS GROUP SUBGROUP ONLY]

As part of this study, we are asking to conduct focus group interviews in a small group of classrooms. We would also like to conduct a focus group with some of your students to learn more about their impressions of NES. If you are willing to allow our study team to speak with you and your students, someone from Abt or EDC will contact you in order to schedule this visit.

The information gathered in the study will help identify ways to improve NES and other similar programs. However, your participation is completely voluntary. Participation in the study will not affect whether you or your students are eligible for any programs or services. All information that we collect is confidential and will only be used for the purposes of the evaluation.

If you are willing to be part of this study, please reply to this message. Please also let us know when your school year ends, so that we can time our logs and survey accordingly. We will then send you additional information on how you will access the log and surveys. Every month we will send you an email with a new link to your teacher log and at the end of the school year, we will send you a link to the online survey.

If you have any questions about the evaluation, please call Alina Martinez of Abt Associates Inc. (phone: (855) 646-3308 (toll-free); email: NASAEplorerSchoolsStudy@abtassoc.com), or Brian Yoder, Evaluation Manager at NASA (phone: (202) 358-7338 (toll call); email: brian.yoder@nasa.gov). For questions about your rights as a participant in this study, contact Teresa Doksum at the Abt Associates Inc. Institutional Review Board at 877-520-6835 (toll-free).

Thank you,

Alina Martinez
Study Director