

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO TEACHERS AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

TEACHER NOTIFICATION LETTER AND FACT SHEET

MATHEMATICA
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Dear Teacher,

Date

Your school is one of 100 Title I schools selected from across the country to participate in an important component of the National Assessment of Title I examining children's language development and reading comprehension. The National Title I Study of Implementation and Outcomes: Early Childhood Language Development (ECLD) is sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) in the U.S. Department of Education and is being conducted by Mathematica Policy Research (Mathematica), in partnership with Decision Information Resources (DIR) and the University of Illinois-Chicago. District officials and your principal are already aware that your school has been selected to participate in the study.

The study begins in fall 2011 and continues through spring 2012. Prekindergarten-3rd grade classrooms in your school and students in these classrooms were randomly selected for the study. 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. We will observe your classroom in the fall and again in the spring in order to learn about different practices teachers use to help children to become better readers. We are also asking teachers in spring 2012 to take a one-time 25 minute survey and complete up to 7 brief reports on the sampled children in their class. Teachers completing the survey will receive a \$20 gift card and will also receive \$5 for each teacher student report completed.

Findings from the study will be used to identify school-wide programs and instructional practices associated with growth in students' language development and reading achievement and to inform future evaluations of these programs and practices. All the information that we collect from the classroom observations, teacher survey, and teacher student reports will be used for research purposes only. Your responses are very important for producing reliable and valid data. Your answers will be combined with all other surveys, and no information identifying individual teachers or their schools will be released to anyone, including your principal or any one in your school district or state education office.

The enclosed packet provides additional information regarding the study and about your participation. It includes:

- Frequently Asked Questions
- 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,

An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer

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

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the study about?

This research 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. Findings from the study will be used to inform future studies of promising programs and practices and to improve the reading achievement of at-risk children.

How will the study work?

Mathematica selected 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 are randomly selected to participate in the study. Seven students in each classroom are randomly selected and asked to participate in the study. Students with parental consent are given assessments of language development, background knowledge, and listening or reading comprehension in fall 2011 and again in spring 2012. In addition, selected classrooms are observed by study team members, teachers are asked to complete a brief questionnaire and a short report on each participating student in their class, and principals are 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, and any information about receipt of special education services are also collected. The parents of the children in the study are 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, Decision Information Resources, Inc., and the University of Illinois-Chicago.

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 are students being asked to do as part of the study?

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

home language. Assessments are individually administered and designed so that students can demonstrate their maximum skills in the areas of focus for the study.

Why do you need to interview students' parents and what types of questions are asked?

The parent interview allows us to measure background characteristics of the children's home environment that may influence their language development, background knowledge, and comprehension skills. Parents are asked about their education, employment status, income level, marital status, languages spoken in the home, and home literacy environment, such as reading to the child, help with homework, and availability of literacy materials including books and magazines.

How much of my time does the study require?

In spring 2012, teachers are asked to complete a brief, 25 minute survey and a brief teacher-student report (short questionnaire) for each student in their class who is participating in the study. Teachers completing the survey will receive a \$20 gift card. The teacher-student report is a short form requesting information on sampled students such as engagement, attention, instructional grouping for reading, and special placement. You will receive \$5 for each teacher-student report completed.

In addition, the study team observes classrooms on two occasions during the school year (twice in fall 2011 and twice in spring 2012). The observations do not require any additional time and teachers are not being asked to deviate from their typical class activities.

Is information kept private?

Information on each study participant is treated with strict confidentiality as required by The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183. Study results are reported only in group form, such as "the average reading comprehension score for third graders increased by 10 points from fall to spring of the school year." No identifying information is released with any of the study results. School and district officials only see the overall study results. They never see or have access to your survey responses, or the results of the classroom observations at anytime. The final data, once stripped of any identifying information, will become available for secondary analysis under a license agreement that requires users to agree to abide by the confidentiality conditions specified in The Education Sciences Report Act of 2002.

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].

Who can I contact for information about my rights as a participant?

Please contact Jennifer Stavrakos at Public Private Ventures, an independent Institutional Review Board (IRB) which reviewed this research. She can be reached by telephone at (215) 557-4446 or by email at jcstavrakos@ppv.org.