

# Supporting Statement for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions for the Study of Emerging Teacher Evaluation Systems in the United States

## Appendix I: Recruitment Letter to Superintendents

Dear [Superintendent Name]:

I am writing to invite [Name of District] to participate in an important study of emerging teacher evaluation systems in the United States. The study, which is funded by my office -- the U.S. Department of Education's Policy and Program Studies Service -- will examine planning, design, and early implementation of nine local teacher evaluation systems that incorporate many of the elements of the Department's vision for these systems and how they can contribute to improving educator quality. Policy Studies Associates, under contract with the Department is conducting the study and is identifying districts like yours for the study sample. The sample will include systems that:

- Rely on multiple measures of teacher performance, including gains in student achievement and observations of classroom practice, to assess individual teachers
- Clearly distinguish among teachers at various levels of proficiency and effectiveness
- Include both a formative and summative phase in each annual evaluation cycle
- Provide timely feedback to teachers that can guide individual improvement and engagement in professional learning activities
- Use results of the evaluation process to inform decisions about retention, dismissal, and compensation

### **Paragraph for sites in early phase of implementation:**

*Data collection for the study will involve a two-day visit to the district by two members of the study team. During the visit, the team members will interview 15-18 members of the district staff who have responsibility for and/or are knowledgeable about the new teacher evaluation system. Each interview will last approximately 45 minutes and will cover issues related to the planning and design of the teacher evaluation system, current operations, and challenges and strategies for overcoming them. The study will not involve any classroom observations, and all interviews will be scheduled to avoid or minimize disruptions to instruction. In addition to the interviews, the study team will collect documents related to the new teacher evaluation system that are publically available.*

## **Paragraph for fully operational sites**

*Data collection for the study will involve a three and a half day visit to the district by two members of the study team. During the visit, the team members will interview 15-18 members of the district staff who have responsibility for and/or are knowledgeable about the new teacher evaluation system. Each interview will last approximately 45 minutes and will cover issues related to the planning and design of the teacher evaluation system, current operations, and challenges and strategies for overcoming them. In addition to the individual interviews, the study team will conduct seven focus group interviews of teachers with the following kinds of assignments:*

- *Special education teachers who may not have standardized student achievement tests as part of their evaluation measures*
- *Teachers who teach English language learners in language instructional education programs*
- *Teachers in grades 4 and 5*
- *Middle school teachers who teach in at least one tested subject and grade*
- *Middle school teachers who teach non-tested core academic subjects and grades*
- *High school teachers who teach in the tested grades and subjects*
- *High school teachers who teach in non-tested academic subjects and grades*

*Each focus group will last 60-75 minutes and will include five to seven teachers.*

*The study will not involve any classroom observations, and all interviews will be scheduled to avoid or minimize disruptions to instruction. In addition to the interviews, the study team will collect documents related to the new teacher evaluation system that are publically available.*

Prior to each interview the study team will explain the purpose of the study, the topics to be covered, procedures for protecting respondents' privacy, and the voluntary nature of the study.

In addition to interviewing district staff, the study team will interview several key external stakeholders, including leaders and representatives of local teacher unions. Prior to each site visit, we will also interview several staff in the state education agency and state-level external stakeholders to learn about the state context and support for the new teacher evaluation system.

All data collection activities will take place between February 1 and May 30, 2012, with site visits to be scheduled at the convenience of participating districts.

The final report will present key observations and findings from the case studies and will amplify them with vignettes from the various sites. In addition, profiles of each teacher evaluation system

will be included in appendices to the report. Prior to publication and dissemination, we will offer participating districts the opportunity to review sections of the report, especially the vignettes and profiles that identify the districts, for accuracy and to notify us of any factual errors. Please note that we will not identify any individuals or schools by name in any reports or other communications about the study findings. All data collected through the interviews and review of documents will be maintained in secure files and will be accessible only by members of the study team. All data files will be destroyed as soon as they are no longer necessary for completing the study. We will not release any information that identifies individual respondents except as may be required by law.

If you agree to participate in the study, we will invite you to designate someone in the district to serve as a liaison to the study team. The study team will work with this person to schedule the interviews, and we will welcome their assistance in helping us to identify and gain access to key documents related to the new teacher evaluation system.

Participation in the study is voluntary, but we certainly hope that you will agree to have your district included in the study sample so that state and local policymakers and leaders from around the country can benefit from your experience and insights. We also ask that you encourage district staff who may be identified as interview respondents to agree to participate in the study.

Bruce Haslam from Policy Studies Associates, the Principal Investigator for the study, will be calling you to discuss your willingness to have your district participate in the study and to answer any questions that you may have. Please do not hesitate to contact Elizabeth Eisner on my staff if you would like additional information about our plans. Ms. Eisner can be reached at 202-260-1109 or [Elizabeth.eisner@ed.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.eisner@ed.gov) .

Sincerely,

Stuart Kerachsky  
Director  
Policy and Program Studies Service  
Office of Planning, Evaluation and  
Policy Development