

Appendix A

Recruitment Letter for School Districts/Diocese (on ED letterhead)

[Date]
[Title] [Name First] [Name Last]
[Title/Department]
[State District]
[Address]
[City], [State] [Zip code]



Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

I am writing to let you know that your [district/ diocese] has been selected to participate in the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17 (MGLS:2017) field test, which is planned for spring 2015. Your [district's/diocese] participation is critical toward assuring the quality of the national study of students in middle school. While participation in this study is voluntary, we ask you to support the participation of schools in your [district/diocese]. Participating schools will receive \$250 for their help with the study. We will also provide \$50 for an IT coordinator to help facilitate online access for the assessments, \$150 for a school coordinator to serve as the central point of contact and coordinate logistics with the data collection team, and an additional \$50 incentive for the school coordinator for securing student participation rates of 85% or higher.

The MGLS:2017 is the first study sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to follow a nationally representative sample of students as they enter and move through the middle grades (grades 6, 7, and 8). A key goal of MGLS:2017 is to provide information to better understand the supports students need for academic success and positive life outcomes, including high school graduation, and college and career readiness.

Additional information about the upcoming field test is enclosed for your review. A study representative from Decision Information Resources (DIR) will contact you in the next few days to discuss your [district's/diocese] participation in the field test. If at any time you should have questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact Carol Pistorino at 888-864-1425 toll free or carolp@dir-online.com. You may also access more information about this study by contacting Carolyn Fidelman at NCES at (202) 502-7312 or Carolyn.Fidelman@ed.gov, or by visiting the MGLS:2017 website at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/mgls>.

Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,

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NCES Commissioner

Enclosures

NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002), 20 U.S. Code, § 9543. By law, the data provided by your schools, staff, and students may only be used for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S. Code, § 9573). The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # _____ (expires _____).

Appendix B

Recruitment Letter for School Administrators (on ED letterhead)

[Date]
[Title] [Name First] [Name Last]
[Title/Department]
[School]
[Address]
[City], [State] [Zip code]



Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

I am writing to let you know that your school has been selected to participate in the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17 (MGLS:2017) field test this spring. Your school's participation is essential toward assuring the quality of the national study of students in middle school. While participation is voluntary, I strongly encourage your school's participation in this critical phase of the study. Participating schools will receive \$250 as a thank you for their help with this study. We will also provide \$50 for an IT coordinator to help facilitate online access for the assessments, \$150 for a school coordinator to serve as the central point of contact and coordinate logistics with the data collection team, and an additional \$50 incentive for the school coordinator for securing student participation rates of 85% or higher. [district/diocese] has already approved this study [and a letter of <district/diocese> support is enclosed].

The MGLS:2017 is the first study sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to follow a nationally representative sample of students as they enter and move through the middle grades (grades 6, 7, and 8). A key goal of MGLS:2017 is to provide information to better understand the supports students need for academic success and positive life outcomes, including high school graduation, and college and career readiness.

The spring 2015 field test will be conducted to finalize student assessments and survey instruments planned for the MGLS:2017. We will ask a sample of [fifth-,] sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students, including students with disabilities, to complete an assessment administered at school in small groups by trained study assessors. School administrators, some of the students' teachers (mathematics and special education teachers), and parents will be invited to complete brief online surveys.

Additional information about the upcoming field test is enclosed for your review. In the next few days, a study representative from Decision Information Resources (DIR) will contact you to discuss your school's participation. If at any time you should have questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact Carol Pistorino at 888-864-1425 toll free or carolp@dir-online.com. You may also access more information about this study by contacting Carolyn Fidelman at NCES at (202) 502-7312 or Carolyn.Fidelman@ed.gov, or by visiting the MGLS:2017 website at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/mgls>.

Thank you for your support of this important study of middle grade students.

Sincerely,

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NCES Commissioner

Enclosures

NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002), 20 U.S. Code, § 9543. By law, the data provided by your school, staff, and students may only be used for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S. Code, § 9573). The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # _____ (expires _____).

Appendix C

MGLS:2017 Field Test – Frequently Asked Questions

MIDDLE GRADES LONGITUDINAL STUDY FIELD TEST

SPRING 2015

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study field test? The field test will lead the way in the creation and development of student assessments and survey instruments to be used for the national data collection taking place as part of the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17. Specifically, the field test will be used to validate sixth, seventh, and eighth grade mathematics and reading assessments planned for the national study. Surveys developed for mathematics and special education teachers, principals, and parents will also be tested during the field test—allowing us to evaluate the data collection instruments and procedures in a real world setting, identify potential challenges that could hinder the national effort, and test out various approaches that could inform plans for the national study. Schools participating in the field test will have a chance to provide constructive feedback that will be used to improve the national collection and provide the basis upon which the remainder of the study will be built.

Who is participating in the field test? How many districts, schools, and students will participate? A sample of students enrolled in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8, attending a public or private school in the contiguous United States will participate in the MGLS:2017 field test. There will be 5 districts with approximately 10 schools each, for a total of 50 schools. Within each school, there will be an average of 82 students, for a total of 4,075 students participating from schools across the United States.

Why should my school participate in the field test of MGLS:2017? One of the main goals of MGLS:2017 is to gain knowledge about the supports middle school students need to be successful in school and in life. As a part of the field test of MGLS:2017, your school would be contributing to the national study and providing information that will influence educational policies in the future. Your participation will also help us refine our procedures to minimize the burden and inconvenience to schools participating in the national study. As a thank you for help with this study participating schools will receive \$250, while an IT coordinator appointed by the school will receive \$50 for help in facilitating online access for the assessments, and a school coordinator \$150 for serving as the central point of contact and coordinating logistics with the study team plus an additional \$50 for securing student participation rates of 85% or higher.

When will the field test be conducted? Onsite data collection will be conducted in the schools between February and May 2015. Decision Information Resources (DIR) will work with schools to identify a convenient week for the study's data collection staff to visit for 3-5 days during that time period.

Where will the field test be conducted? Data collection will be conducted in the schools that agree to participate.

Do teachers need to help administer the assessments? No, DIR field staff will visit the schools, bringing with them all the materials required to administer the assessments. Although teachers will not administer the assessments, there may be cases (e.g., when a student works one-on-one with an aide), that the teacher or aide is asked to be in the room while the assessment is administered.

Who is conducting the field test? MGLS:2017 is a federally-funded national study sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education. The field test will be conducted by Decision Information Resources (DIR) and its partners Mathematica Policy Research and Educational Testing Service (ETS) on behalf of NCES.

What kind of information will be needed from my school? As a part of the MGLS:2017 field test, we will ask the school administrator to appoint a staff member to coordinate the in-school data collection process (i.e. a

“school coordinator”). The study team will work with the school coordinator to schedule the on-site data collection and determine the best space within the school for the assessments. In addition, the study team will work with the school coordinator to gather student rosters, coordinate the parent consent process, identify mathematics and, where applicable, special education teachers of sampled students, assist with the collection of administrative data on sampled students, and follow up with teachers and administrators that have not completed their questionnaires.

What would the field test look like in my school? During the spring semester of 2015, approximately 82 students (approximately 25 per grade 6-8 and up to nine 5th graders in schools with 5th grade) will be selected to participate in the MGLS:2017 field test. Students will be asked to complete assessments of their mathematics and reading achievement, socioemotional development and executive functions, and to answer questions about themselves and their school experiences. To reduce the amount of time that we will need from each student, students will be randomly assigned to complete different sets of assessment and questionnaire items and measures. No student will be asked to complete the entire set of assessments or to answer all the items in the student questionnaire. Student assessments and the student questionnaire will be computer-based, and can be conducted in the school’s computer lab or on laptops/tablets provided by the study team. The assessments and questionnaire, which will be administered in small groups of approximately 6 students, should take about 90 minutes to complete. The assessments and questionnaire may be done in one session or two, depending on the scheduling arrangements of the school. A team of three to five trained field staff would be on the school campus to assist students during the administration.

How much time will the study require from teachers, principals, and other school staff? We will do everything we can to minimize the burden on teachers, principals, and other school staff participating in this field test. Mathematics teachers of sampled students will be asked in spring 2015 to complete a brief teacher survey (20-25 minutes) about the classes they teach and about their background and experience, and a short (10 minute) teacher-student report for each of their students participating in the field test who are in one of their classes. The teacher-student report will collect data on individual student’s classroom performance and academic skills. In most cases, teachers will be asked to complete no more than 3 teacher-student reports, although a small number of teachers will be asked to complete as many as 8. Special education teachers/service providers of sampled students will also be asked to complete a two-part questionnaire, similar to the mathematics teacher instrument.

Principals will be asked to complete a short Web survey (30 minutes) in spring 2015 to report on school programs, policies, services, as well as school climate. School staff will be asked to provide transcript data and other administrative data for a sample of the students in the study. In addition, DIR field staff will complete an observation checklist on the school’s physical plant and resources while onsite for the student assessments. This checklist does not require any additional time from school staff or teachers.

Participating schools will be offered \$250 to offset the burden associated with the MGLS:2017 field test. The IT coordinator appointed by the school will receive \$50 for help in facilitating online access for the assessments, and the school coordinator \$150 for serving as the central point of contact and coordinating logistics with the study team plus an additional \$50 for securing student participation rates of 85% or higher.

Will the data collected from our school be kept confidential? Under law, the information provided by your school, staff, students, and their parents may only be used for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law [Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002), 20 U.S. Code, Section 9573]. All field staff and other staff working on the study have signed an affidavit of non-disclosure where they swear to abide by this law. Field staff have also undergone a criminal background check as a condition of employment. By law, everyone working on this NCES survey is subject to a jail term of up to 5 years, a fine of up to \$250,000, or both if he or she willfully discloses ANY identifiable information about any study participant.

Who can I contact for more information about the study? Please contact Carol Pistorino, the study’s Co-Director, toll free at 888-864-1425 or carolp@dir-online.com.

Appendix D

MGLS:2017 Field Test Summary

The MIDDLE GRADES LONGITUDINAL STUDY FIELD TEST

SPRING 2015



The Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016–17 (MGLS:2017) will be the first study to follow a nationally-representative sample of students as they enter and move through the middle grades (grades 6, 7, and 8). **The purpose of the spring 2015 field test is to evaluate and refine the data collection instruments and procedures to be used for the national study in 2017.** Schools participating in the field test will have a chance to provide constructive feedback that will be used to improve the national collection.

The MGLS:2017 field test will include approximately **50 schools from across the U.S.** and will collect data from **4,075 students.** **The student sample will include approximately 1,200 students each in grades 6, 7, and 8 plus 350 in grade 5.** **The study will also include a sample of students with disabilities and an effort will be made during student sample selection to ensure that in the end at least 250 students with disabilities are included.** **The field test will also be conducted with 600 teachers (including 450 mathematics teachers and 150 special education teachers of the selected students), 819 parents, and 50 school administrators.** The field test will be conducted from **February to May 2015**, with onsite data collection taking place over the course of **3-5 days at each school.**

Data collection efforts will include:

- Mathematics and reading achievement assessments
- Assessment of executive functions
- Student questionnaire
- Parent questionnaire
- Mathematics and Special Education Teacher-level teacher questionnaire
- Mathematics and Special Education Student-level teacher questionnaire
- School Administrator questionnaire
- Facilities observation checklist
- Student records abstracts

For more information contact: Carol Pistorino, Decision Information Resources (carolp@dir-online.com), or Carolyn Fidelman, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute for Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education (Carolyn.Fidelman@ed.gov).

Appendix E

Guide for Recruitment Calls

District recruitment calls. Within a week of sending the invitation materials, a study team member will call the district to obtain permission to recruit schools and to collect and/or validate key sampling information. The goals of these phone calls are the following:

1. Briefly describe the study
2. Answer any immediate questions and address any concerns
3. Confirm the district's agreement to participate/permission to contact schools directly
4. Review district's consent policies for student testing
5. Determine whether additional research applications are required
6. Identify best contact or source to confirm key middle school characteristics and to obtain school disability enrollment information and class rosters.
7. Ask district to provide a letter of support that can be included in our school mailing.

In preparation of the final sampling frame, we will ask districts for recent changes to school configurations or enrollment in schools in the district. Using school characteristics obtained from public and private school universe files and district and school websites, we will go over the information with the district to ensure it is accurate. In addition, because we will be oversampling students with disabilities, we will ask for counts or percent of students with disabilities by school and sampled grades (grades 6, 7, and 8). All of this information will be recorded to update the school sampling frame as follows:

1. Using a spreadsheet populated with existing school information including all schools with grades 6-8, school names, size of enrollment and other characteristics needed for sampling – we will confirm the accuracy of our information.
2. Determine how we can obtain a list of students with disabilities by school, grade level, and type of disability from the district and arrange to obtain that list. The MGLS:2017 has been granted a FEPPRA exemption giving us access to this information without first obtaining parent consent. District recruiters will be prepared to field questions about permission to access these data. Disabilities to be included are:
 - a. Specific learning disability
 - b. Emotional disturbance
 - c. Autism

School recruitment calls. As soon as schools are selected, and with the approval of the district [diocese or relevant private school administrative body] we will send out recruitment packets to schools and follow-up by telephone with school administrators a few days later. During the initial school contact, we will:

1. Provide additional information about the MGLS:2017 study and the importance of the spring field test.

2. Provide more details about activities for the spring 2015 data collection, including garnering parent and student participation.
3. Answer any questions the administrator may have and address any concerns.
4. Ask the school administrator to appoint a staff member as the school coordinator to work with the study team to coordinate the in-school data collection process.
5. Ask the school administrator to appoint a staff member as the IT coordinator to help facilitate online access for the assessments.
6. Indicate that the school administrator survey is part of the field test.
7. Determine the best way to gather class rosters for mathematics classes and for students with disabilities.

Appendix F
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT
Middle Grades Longitudinal Study 2016-17 (MGLS:2017)
(DIR/Mathematica/ETS under Contract No. ED-IES-13-C-0008)

Safeguards for Individuals Against Invasion of Privacy: In accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 United States Code 552a), the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279), the Federal Statistical Confidentiality Order of 1997, the E-Government Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-347), the Computer Security Act of 1987, the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES') *Restricted Use Data Procedures Manual*, and NCES' *Standards and Policies*, Decision Information Resources (DIR) and all its subcontractors are required to comply with the applicable provisions of the legislation, regulations, and guidelines and to undertake all necessary safeguards for individuals against invasions of privacy.

To provide this assurance and these safeguards in performance of work on this project, all staff, consultants, and agents of DIR, and its subcontractors who have any access to study data, shall be bound by the following assurance.

Assurance of Confidentiality

1. In accordance with all applicable legislation, regulations, and guidelines, DIR assures all respondents that the confidentiality of their responses to all information requests will be maintained by DIR and NCES to the fullest extent allowable under the law, and that no information obtained in the course of this activity may be disclosed in a manner in which the individual is identifiable, unless the individual has consented to such disclosure, to anyone other than authorized staff, consultants, agents, or representatives of DIR, its subcontractors, and NCES.
2. The following safeguards will be implemented to assure that confidentiality is protected by all employees, consultants, agents, and representatives of DIR and all subcontractors and that physical security of the records is provided:
 - a. All staff with access to data will take an oath of nondisclosure and sign an affidavit to that effect.
 - b. At each site where these items are processed or maintained, all confidential records that will permit identification of individuals shall be kept in a safe, locked room when not in use or personally attended by project staff.
 - c. When confidential records are not locked, admittance to the room or area in which they reside shall be restricted to staff sworn to confidentiality on this project.
 - d. All electronic data shall be maintained in secure and protected data files, and personally identifying information shall be maintained on separate files from statistical data collected under this contract.
 - e. All data files on network or multi-user systems shall be under strict control of a database manager with access restricted to project staff sworn to confidentiality, and then only on a need-to-know basis.
 - f. All data files on single-user computers shall be password protected and all such machines will be locked and maintained in a locked room when not attended by project staff sworn to confidentiality.
 - g. External electronically stored data files (e.g., tapes on diskettes) shall be maintained in a locked storage device in a locked room when not attended by project staff sworn to confidentiality.
 - h. Any data released to the general public shall be appropriately masked or perturbed such that linkages to individually identifying information are not possible and individual identification cannot be disclosed.
 - i. Data or copies of data may not leave the authorized site for any reason.
3. Staff, consultants, agents, or DIR and all its subcontractors will take all necessary steps to ensure that the letter and intent of all applicable legislation, regulations, and guidelines are enforced at all times through appropriate qualifications standards for all personnel working on this project and through adequate training and periodic follow-up procedures.

By my signature affixed below, I hereby swear and affirm that I have carefully read this statement and fully understand the statement as well as legislative and regulatory assurances that pertain to the confidential nature of all records to be handled in regard to this project, and will adhere to all safeguards that have been developed to provide such confidentiality. As an employee, consultant, agent, or representative of DIR or one of its subcontractors, consultants, agents, or representatives, I understand that I am prohibited by law from disclosing any such confidential information to anyone other than staff, consultant, agents, or representatives of DIR, its subcontractors, or agents, and NCES. I understand that any willful and knowing individual disclosure or allowance of disclosure in violation of the applicable legislation, regulations, and guidelines is punishable by law and would subject the violator to possible fine or imprisonment.

(Signature)

____/____/____
(Date)

(Supervisor's Signature)

____/____/____
(Date)