**National Center for Education Statistics**

**Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-2017 (MGLS:2017) Cognitive Interviews**

**Volume IV -**

**Respondent Communication Materials**

**OMB# 1850-0803 v. 97**



**February 27, 2014**

A. E-mail Recruitment Message for School Administrators, on ED Letterhead

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Subject: NCES Research Study for School Administrators

Dear <NAME>:

My name is <CONTACT NAME> and I am contacting you from <DECISION INFORMATION RESOURCES (www.dir-online.com)/MATHEMATICA POLICY RESEARCH (www.mathematica-mpr.com). We are looking for school administrators who oversee schools serving 6th, 7th, and 8th graders to review survey questions that will be part of the school administrator survey for a national research study. Participation is completely voluntary and all responses 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.C., § 9573]. Each participant will receive a $25 Visa gift card as a thank you for their time.

Decision Information Resources (DIR) and Mathematica Policy Research are working with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, to design a new study named the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17 (or MGLS:2017) that will investigate how students learn and progress through the middle grades. This groundbreaking study is the first study of its kind to follow a nationally representative sample of 6th grade students through their 8th grade year in school. The study will collect information from students, parents, teachers, and school administrators about students’ educational experiences in the middle grades. The data from the study will inform parents, educators, and policymakers about how students grow and develop- academically and socially- in the middle grades.

In preparation for the study, eligible administrators who agree to participate will be given a printed set of survey questions that can be reviewed independently. You will then be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with a researcher to discuss the items. The interviews will take place over the phone and should last no more than 30 minutes. Reading through the materials and preparing for the call should take no more than 5 minutes. The questions asked will relate to various aspects of your school such as school climate and structure, school services, course offerings, and assisting students with transitions. Further, we would like to ask you a few questions about the best way to contact and follow-up with individuals in your position.

These interviews are an important part of the MGLS:2017 development process and your opinions are greatly needed. More information about the MGLS:2017 is available online at: (INSERT REFERENCE TO ED WEBPAGE IF AVAILABLE).

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please call <CONTACT PHONE> or e-mail <CONTACT E-MAIL> to see if you are eligible to participate. We look forward to speaking with you soon!

Thank you,

<NAME>

<DECISION INFORMATION RESOURCES/MATHEMATICA POLICY RESEARCH>

<CONTACT PHONE>

B. E-mail Recruitment Message for Mathematics Teachers, on ED Letterhead

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Subject: NCES Research Study for Mathematics Educators

Dear <NAME>:

My name is <CONTACT NAME> and I am contacting you from <DECISION INFORMATION RESOURCES (www.dir-online.com)/MATHEMATICA POLICY RESEARCH (www.mathematica-mpr.com). We are recruiting middle-grade mathematics teachers to review items to be included as part of the mathematics assessment and teacher questionnaires for a national research study. Participation is completely voluntary and all responses 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.C., § 9573]. Each participant will receive a $75 Visa gift card as a thank you for their time.

Decision Information Resources (DIR) and Mathematica Policy Research are working with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, to design a new study named the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17 (or MGLS:2017) that will investigate how students learn and progress through the middle grades. This groundbreaking study is the first of its kind to follow a nationally representative sample of 6th grade students through their 8th grade year in school. The study will collect information from students, parents, teachers, and school administrators about students’ educational experiences in the middle grades. The data from the study will inform parents, educators, and policymakers about how students grow and develop- academically and socially- in the middle grades.

In preparation for the study, eligible mathematics teachers will be asked to take part in a two-step participation process. First, you will be asked to independently review assessment items and survey questions, write down your comments or feedback and send the information back to us. Second, you will be asked to join a “virtual” focus group of approximately five teachers who will collectively discuss the assessment items and survey questions. The focus group discussion will be led by a researcher from Mathematica Policy Research and should last approximately one hour. The anticipated total time commitment will be approximately four hours (up to three hours to review the items and one hour for the focus group).

These focus groups are an important stage of the MGLS:2017 instrument development process and your opinions are greatly needed. More information about the MGLS:2017 is available online at: (INSERT REFERENCE TO ED WEBPAGE IF AVAILABLE).

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please call <CONTACT PHONE> or e-mail <CONTACT E-MAIL> to see if you are eligible. We look forward to speaking with you soon!

Thank you,

<NAME>

<DECISION INFORMATION RESOURCES/MATHEMATICA POLICY RESEARCH>

<CONTACT PHONE>

C. E-mail Recruitment Message for Parents of Middle School Students, on ED Letterhead

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Subject: NCES Research Study for Middle Grade Students and their Parents

Dear <NAME>:

My name is <CONTACT NAME> and I am contacting you from <DECISION INFORMATION RESOURCES www.dir-online.com)/MATHEMATICA POLICY RESEARCH ([www.mathematica-mpr.com)](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com))>. We are recruiting 6th, 7th and 8th grade students to participate in research interviews to support the development of assessment items and survey questions for a national research study. Participation is completely voluntary and all responses 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.C., § 9573]. If your child is eligible to participate, he or she will receive a $25 Visa gift card for their time. In addition, you will be given a $20 Visa gift card for your time if you bring your child to and from the interview site.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) would like to know if middle grade students understand the assessment and survey questions being developed for the study, called the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-2017 (MGLS:2017). Your child will be asked to participate in an hour-long session at one of our corporate offices or in a community space close to you (such as the public library) if you live more than 30 minutes from our offices. Participating students will be asked to do **one** of the following three activities: 1) Answer a series of math assessment items with paper and pencil; 2) Complete a series of tasks on a laptop or tablet; or 3) Answer a series of paper and pencil survey questions. A one-on-one interview will follow whichever task the student is asked to complete. Students will not be graded on their responses.

The feedback received from your child will provide NCES with valuable information to improve the student math assessment and refine the survey questions that will be included in the national research study.

If you are interested in having your child participate in this very important research study, please call <CONTACT PHONE> or e-mail <CONTACT E-MAIL>. We look forward to speaking with you soon!

Thank you,

<NAME>

<DECISION INFORMATION RESOURCES/MATHEMATICA POLICY RESEARCH>

<CONTACT PHONE>

D. Recruitment Phone Script/Screener for School Administrators

Good morning/afternoon. May I please speak to <NAME>?

Good morning/afternoon. My name is <CONTACT NAME> and I am contacting you from <DECISION INFORMATION RESOURCES/MATHEMATICA POLICY RESEARCH>. We are looking for school administrators who oversee schools serving 6th, 7th, and 8th graders to review survey questions that will go on the school administrator survey for a national research study, as well as participate in a telephone interview to provide feedback.

Participation is completely voluntary and all responses 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.C., § 9573]. Each participant will receive a $25 Visa gift card as a thank you for their time.

Decision Information Resources (DIR) and Mathematica Policy Research are working with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, to design a new study called the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17 (or MGLS:2017) that will investigate how students learn and progress through the middle grades. *This groundbreaking study is the first of its kind to follow a nationally representative sample of 6th grade students through their 8th grade year in school. The study will collect information from students, parents, teachers, and school administrators about students’ educational experiences in the middle grades.*

*In preparation for the study, eligible administrators who agree to participate will be given a printed set of survey questions that can be reviewed independently. You will then be asked to participate in a one-on-one telephone interview with a researcher to discuss the items. The interviews will take place over the phone and should last no more than 30 minutes. Reading through the materials and preparing for the call should take no more than 5 minutes. The questions asked will relate to various aspects of your school such as school climate and structure, school services, course offerings, and assisting students with transitions. Further, we would like to ask you a few questions about the best way to contact and follow-up with individuals in your position.*

*These interviews are an important part of the MGLS:2017 instrument development process. Your comments, along with the comments of other school administrators, will help NCES refine the school administrator questionnaire and their recruitment process.*

*Are you interested in participating in this very important research study?*

**[If no]:** Thank you for your time. Have a wonderful day/evening.

**[If yes]:** Great, thank you very much. I would now like to ask you a few brief screening questions to ensure that we include a broad mix of administrators in our interviews and that you will be a good fit for participating.

SCREENER

[Interviewer: Determine recruitment needs in advance. End the screener interview at the first point the administrator gives a response indicating that their demographics have already been adequately sampled. Be sure to record all responses.

End screener script by stating: Based on the requirements of this study, we are not able to include you in the interview process at this time. We greatly appreciate your help. Thank you for your time.]

1. What is the name and location (city, state) of the school where you are an administrator?
2. Would you describe this as an urban , suburban, or rural community?
3. What type of school is this?
   1. Public
   2. Private
   3. Charter
   4. Parochial
4. What is the size of the student population at your school?
   1. 299 students or less
   2. 300-599 students
   3. 600 students or more
5. What grades are served in your school?

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| K | 7 |
| 1 | 8 |
| 2 | 9 |
| 3 | 10 |
| 4 | 11 |
| 5 | 12 |

* 1. 🡪**END SCREENER IF SCHOOL DOES NOT SERVE 6th, 7th or 8th GRADE** (Based on the requirements of this study, we are not able to include you in the school administrator interviews at this time. We greatly appreciate your help. Thank you for your time.)

ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANT SCRIPT

Thank you for taking the time to answer the screening questions. You are eligible to participate in the interviews. Again, you will be asked to review and comment on survey topics and items independently, and then participate in a one-on-one telephone interview that should take no more than 30 minutes.

These interviews are an important stage of the MGLS:2017 survey development and recruitment process. The interviews will be audio- recorded so researchers can review the recordings later. No one else will hear the recordings. Participation is entirely voluntary and all responses 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.C., § 9573].

Your feedback, along with the feedback of other middle-grade school administrators, is valuable and will help NCES improve the questionnaires that will be administered across the country. As a thank you for your time and effort, you will be given a $25 Visa gift card.

The first step to this process will be gaining your informed consent. Would you be willing to submit a signed consent form, indicating your approval to participate in the interviews?

**[If No]:** Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today about this important study.

**[If Yes]** That’s great. We will send you a confirmation e-mail containing a consent form and will follow-up with the survey questionnaire, instructions, and the scheduled time for the telephone interview once the signed consent form is received. What e-mail and mailing address would you like us to use to send you this information?

We may need to reach you by telephone. Is the number I called the best number to use?

Thank you. Do you have any questions at this time?

[Interviewer: Answer any questions.]

If you have any questions when you receive the consent form or before your scheduled interview, please call <PHONE NUMBER>.

Thank you again for agreeing to be part of this very important research study. We look forward to receiving your valuable input for the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17.

E. Recruitment Phone Script/Screener for Mathematics Teachers

Good morning/afternoon. May I please speak to <NAME>?

Good morning/afternoon. My name is <CONTACT NAME> and I am contacting you from <DECISION INFORMATION RESOURCES/MATHEMATICA POLICY RESEARCH>. We are recruiting middle grade mathematics teachers who teach 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, to review assessment items and survey questions for a national research study, and participate in a telephone interview to provide feedback.

Participation is completely voluntary and all responses 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.C., § 9573]. Each participant will receive a $75 Visa gift card as a thank you for their time.

Decision Information Resources (DIR) and Mathematica Policy Research are working with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, to design a new study called the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17 (or MGLS:2017) that will investigate how students learn and progress through the middle grades. *This groundbreaking study is the first of its kind to follow a nationally representative sample of 6th grade students through their 8th grade year in school. The study will collect information from students, parents, teachers, and school administrators about students’ educational experiences in the middle grades.*

In preparation for the study, eligible mathematics teachers will be asked to take part in a two-step participation process. First, you will be asked to independently review assessment items and survey questions, write down your comments or feedback and send the information back to us. Second, you will be asked to join a “virtual” focus group of approximately five teachers who will collectively discuss the assessment items and survey questions. The focus group discussion will be led by a researcher at Mathematica Policy Research *and should last approximately one hour. The anticipated total time commitment will be approximately four hours (up to three hours to review the items and one hour for the focus group).*

*These focus groups are an important part of the MGLS:2017 instrument development process. Your comments, along with the comments of other mathematics educators, will help NCES refine the mathematics assessment and teacher questionnaires.*

*Are you interested in participating in this very important research study?*

**[If no]:** Thank you for your time. Have a wonderful day/evening.

**[If yes]:** Great, thank you very much. I would now like to ask you a few brief screening questions to ensure that we include a broad mix of educators in our focus groups and that you will be a good fit for participating.

SCREENER

[Interviewer: Determine recruitment needs in advance. End the screener interview at the first point the educator gives a response indicating that their demographics have already been adequately sampled. Be sure to record all responses.

End screener script by stating: Based on the requirements of this study, we are not able to include you in the focus groups at this time. We greatly appreciate your help. Thank you for your time.]

1. What is the name and location (city, state) of the school where you are a teacher?
2. What grade level(s) will you teach this year?
   1. Sixth grade (recruit 5)
   2. Seventh grade (recruit 5)
   3. Eighth grade (recruit 5)
   4. Other 🡪**END SCREENER** (Based on the requirements of this study, we are not able to include you in the focus groups at this time. We greatly appreciate your help. Thank you for your time.)
3. What is the size of the student population at your school?
   1. 299 students or less
   2. 300-599 students
   3. 600 students or more
4. What grades are served in your school?

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| 3 | 10 |
| 4 | 11 |
| 5 | 12 |

* 1. 🡪**END SCREENER IF SCHOOL DOES NOT SERVE 6th, 7th or 8th GRADE** (Based on the requirements of this study, we are not able to include you in the focus groups at this time. We greatly appreciate your help. Thank you for your time.)

ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANT SCRIPT

Thank you for taking the time to answer the screening questions. You are eligible to participate in the voluntary focus groups. Again, you will be asked to independently review and comment on assessment items and survey questions and then participate in one of our *focus groups with other educators that will take place virtually. We estimate the total time commitment as four hours (three hours to review and one hour for the focus group).*

*The focus groups will be audio-recorded so researchers can review the recordings later. No one else will hear the recordings. Participation is entirely voluntary and all responses 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.C., § 9573].

Your feedback, along with the feedback of other middle-grade mathematics teachers, is valuable and will help NCES improve the math assessment and teacher surveys that will be administered across the country. As a thank you for your time and effort, you will receive a $75 Visa gift card.

The first step to this process will be gaining your informed consent. Would you be willing to submit a signed consent form, indicating your approval to participate in the voluntary focus groups?

**[If No]:** Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today about this important study.

**[If Yes]** That’s great. We will send you a confirmation e-mail containing a consent form and will follow-up with the assessment items, instructions and the scheduled time for the focus group once the signed consent form is received. What e-mail and mailing address would you like us to use to send you this information?

We may need to reach you by telephone. Is the number I called the best number to use?

Thank you. Do you have any questions at this time?

[Interviewer: Answer any questions.]

If you have any questions when you receive the consent form or before your scheduled focus group, please call <PHONE NUMBER>.

Thank you again for agreeing to be part of this very important research study. We look forward to receiving your valuable input for the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17.

F. Recruitment Phone Script/Screener for Parents

Good morning/afternoon. May I please speak to <NAME>?

Good morning/afternoon. My name is <CONTACT NAME> and I am contacting you from <DECISION INFORMATION RESOURCES/MATHEMATICA POLICY RESEARCH>, a research company based in <HOUSTON, DC/CHICAGO>. We are recruiting 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students to participate in research interviews to support the development of assessment items and survey questions for a national research study.

Participation is completely voluntary and all responses 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.C., § 9573]. If your child is eligible to participate, he or she will receive a $25 Visa gift card for their time. In addition, you will be given a $20 Visa gift card if you bring your child to and from the interview site.

Decision Information Resources (DIR) and Mathematica Policy Research are working with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, to design a new study called the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17 (or MGLS:2017) that will investigate how students learn and progress through the middle grades. *This groundbreaking study is the first of its kind to follow a nationally representative sample of 6th grade students through their 8th grade year in school. The study will collect information from students, parents, teachers, and school administrators about students’ educational experiences in the middle grades.*

NCES would like to know if middle grade students understand the assessment and survey questions being developed for the MGLS:2017 study. To help us with this, your student will be asked to participate in an hour-long session at one of our corporate offices or in a community space close to you (such as a local library) if you live more than 30 minutes from our offices. Participating students will be asked to do **one** of the following activities:

* Answer a series of math items with paper and pencil, then participate in a one-on-one interview with a researcher to provide feedback about whether the questions and instructions were clear, how familiar they are with the math items, and whether they understood the question being asked.
* Complete a few activities or games on a laptop or tablet computer to help us better understand how middle grade students organize, remember, and use information, and then participate in a one-on-one interview with a researcher to provide feedback about the instructions and the tasks themselves.
* Answer a series of paper and pencil survey questions, then participate in a one-on-one interview with a researcher to provide feedback about whether the questions were easy or hard to understand.

The feedback received from students will provide NCES with valuable information to improve the student math assessment and refine the survey questions that will be included in the national research study.

Would your child be interested in participating in this research study?

**[If No]**  Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today about this important study. Have a wonderful day/evening.

**[If Yes]** That is wonderful. I would now like to ask you a few brief screening questions to ensure that we include a broad mix of students in our interviews..

STUDENT SCREENER

[Interviewer: Determine recruitment needs in advance by referring to the recruitment spreadsheet. Our goal is to recruit 66 students overall and we have set targets for students with different characteristics. End the screener interview at the first point the parent gives a response indicating that the student demographics have already been adequately sampled. Be sure to record all responses.

End screener script by stating: Based on the requirements of this study, we are not able to include your middle schooler in the interview process at this time. We greatly appreciate your help. Thank you for your time.]

1. What is your middle school child’s name?
2. Is <STUDENT NAME> a boy or a girl?
3. What grade is <STUDENT NAME> currently in?
4. 6th grade
5. 7th grade
6. 8th grade
7. Other 🡪**END SCREENER IF STUDENT IS NOT ENROLLED IN 6th, 7th or 8th GRADE** (Based on the requirements of this study, we are not able to include your child in the interviews at this time. We greatly appreciate your help. Thank you for your time.)
8. What is the name and location of your child’s school?
9. What type of school is this?
   1. Public
   2. Private
   3. Charter
   4. Parochial
   5. Other (specify\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)
10. What grades are served in your child’s school?

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|  | 6 |
| K | 7 |
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| 2 | 9 |
| 3 | 10 |
| 4 | 11 |
| 5 | 12 |

* 1. 🡪**END SCREENER IF SCHOOL DOES NOT SERVE 6th, 7th, or 8th GRADE** (Based on the requirements of this study, we are not able to include your child in the interviews at this time. We greatly appreciate your help. Thank you for your time.)

1. What is your child’s race or ethnicity?
2. What is your race or ethnicity?
3. What is the primary language spoken in your home?
   1. English
   2. Spanish
      1. All interviews will be conducted in English. Is your child fluent in English?
         1. Yes
         2. No 🡪**END SCREENER IF CHILD IS NOT FLUENT IN ENGLISH** (Based on the requirements of this study, we are not able to include your child in the interviews at this time. We greatly appreciate your help. Thank you for your time.)
      2. Are you fluent in English?
         1. Yes
         2. *No* 🡪DO NOT RECRUIT PARENT FOR PARENT INTERVIEW IF HE/SHE IS NOT FLUENT IN ENGLISH
   3. Other
      1. All interviews will be conducted in English. Is your child fluent in English?
         1. Yes
         2. No 🡪**END SCREENER IF CHILD IS NOT FLUENT IN ENGLISH** (Based on the requirements of this study, we are not able to include your child in the interviews at this time. We greatly appreciate your help. Thank you for your time.)
      2. Are you fluent in English?
         1. Yes
         2. *No* 🡪DO NOT RECRUIT PARENT FOR PARENT INTERVIEW IF HE/SHE IS NOT FLUENT IN ENGLISH
4. What is <STUDENT NAME’S> current zip code?
5. Is your child eligible for the Free or Reduced Price Lunch program?
   1. Yes
   2. No
6. What is your highest level of education?
   1. Middle school or high school but no diploma
   2. High school diploma or GED
   3. College or beyond

ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANT SCRIPT

Thank you for taking the time to answer the screening questions. Your child is eligible to participate in the voluntary student interviews for the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17. The interview sessions will take place outside of school hours and should take no more than 60 minutes.

T*he student interviews will be audio- or video-recorded so researchers can review the recordings later. No one else will hear or see the recordings. Participation is entirely voluntary and student answers will be used only for statistical purposes and* will 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.C., § 9573].

These interviews are an important part of the MGLS:2017 instrument development process. Your child’s feedback, along with the feedback of other middle-grade students, is valuable and will help NCES improve the student assessments and questionnaires that will be administered in the national study. As a thank you for your time and effort, you will be given $45 in Visa gift cards ($25 for your child’s participation and $20 if you bring your child to and from the interview session).

Do you think <STUDENT NAME> would like to participate?

**[If No]** Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today about this important study.

**[If Yes]**  And would you be willing to submit a signed consent form, indicating your approval for <STUDENT NAME> to participate?

**[If No]** Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today about this important study.

**[If Yes]** That’s great. We will send you a confirmation letter containing the address, directions, and consent form. Please sign the form and return it to <NAME, ADDRESS>. When we receive your signed form, we will contact you to set up an interview time. What e-mail or mailing address would you like us to use to send you this information?

We may need to reach you by telephone. Is the number I called the best number to use?

[If the parent/legal guardian qualifies for the parent interview based upon recruitment needs, go to the ‘Parent Recruitment Script’ below after the above is confirmed. If the parent/legal guardian does not qualify for the parent interview, please continue with this script.]

Do you have any questions at this time?

[Interviewer: Answer any questions.]

If you have or <STUDENT NAME> have any questions when you receive the consent form or before the scheduled interview, please call <PHONE NUMBER>.

We look forward to having <STUDENT NAME> participate in this very important research study.

PARENT RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

[Interviewer: Determine recruitment needs in advance. If the parent is potentially eligible to participate in the voluntary research interviews, please read this script.]

We look forward to having <STUDENT NAME> take part in the student interviews for the MGLS:2017 study. In addition to the student sessions, we are also recruiting parents and legal guardians of eligible students to participate in voluntary one-on-one interviews about survey questions for the Parent Questionnaire that will be included in the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17.

*The parent interviews will be audio- or video-recorded so researchers can review the recordings later. No one else will hear the recordings. Participation is entirely voluntary and parent answers will be used only for statistical purposes and 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.C., § 9573]. If you qualify and participate in the interview process, you will receive an additional $20 Visa gift card as a thank you for your participation in the parent interview, in addition to the $20 Visa gift card for taking your child to and from the interview site for the student session.

The questions asked will relate to your child’s education, behavior, and family life, including conversations about future planning, parent involvement with the school, and social skills and positive behaviors. The parent/legal guardian interviews will be conducted over the telephone or in-person during the student interview session and should last no more than 30 minutes. Parents/legal guardians will be provided with a set of survey questions to review independently prior to the interview and then will discuss the items with the interviewer during a later scheduled time. Reading through the materials and preparing for the call should take no more than 5 minutes.

Parent/legal guardian feedback will help NCES improve the survey so that all parents/legal guardians of middle grade students are able to understand and process the questions in the same way.

Your decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect your child’s eligibility to participate in the student interview.

Would you be interested in participating in these important parent interviews?

**[If No]**  Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to having <STUDENT NAME> participate in this very important research study.

**[If Yes]** That is wonderful. And would you be willing to submit a signed form, indicating your consent to participate?

**[If No]** Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to having <STUDENT NAME> participate in this very important research study.

**[If Yes]** That’s great. Thank you. We will send you a separate confirmation letter containing details regarding your participation, including a voluntary consent form to be signed. When we receive the signed consent form, along with the one giving <STUDENT NAME> permission to participate, we will contact you to schedule your child’s interview appointment. Shall we use the same email/mailing address and phone number as indicated previously?

**G. Administrator Informed Consent**

Dear <NAME>

On behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, Decision Information Resources, Inc. (DIR) and Mathematica Policy Research are conducting voluntary interviews with middle-grade school administrators about topics and survey items for the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17 (MGLS:2017).

It is important to NCES that survey questions are clear, relevant, and easy to answer for school administrators. Your feedback will help NCES improve the survey so that all questions are understood and applicable to school administrators like you. As part of the interview process, you will first be provided with a printed set of questions that can be reviewed independently. You will then be asked to participate in a one-on-one telephone interview with a researcher to discuss the topics and items. The questions asked will relate to various aspects of your school such as school climate and structure, course offerings and assisting students with transitions. Further, we would like to know the best way to contact and follow-up with school administrators like you.

Preparing for the interview should take no more than 5 minutes. The interview itself will take approximately 30 minutes and will be audio-recorded so study researchers can review the recordings later. No one else will hear the recordings. Your answers will be used only for statistical purposes and will 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.C., § 9573].

These interviews are an important part of the MGLS:2017 survey development process. Your comments, along with the comments of other middle-grade school administrators, will help NCES improve the school administrator questionnaire. As a thank you for your time and effort, you will be given a $25 Visa gift card for participating in the administrator interview.

Thank you for your consideration in joining the MGLS:2017 school administrator interviews. To acknowledge your voluntary participation, please sign the form below and return to <NAME> at Decision Information Resources, <ADDRESS>.

Respectfully,

< NAME>

Decision Information Resources

I hereby accept the terms described above and agree to participate voluntarily in the MGLS:2017 school administrator interviews.

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Signature Date

H. Teacher Informed Consent

Dear <NAME>

On behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, Decision Information Resources, Inc. (DIR) and Mathematica Policy Research are conducting voluntary focus groups with middle-grade mathematics teachers about assessment items and survey questions for the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17 (MGLS:2017).

It is important to NCES that the assessment items accurately measure middle grade students’ mathematical knowledge and that the survey items are clear and understood by everyone. Your feedback will help NCES improve the MGLS:2017 math assessment and teacher questionnaires. Focus group participation is a two-step process. First, you will be asked to independently review assessment items and survey questions, write down your comments or feedback, and send the information back to us. Second, you will be asked to join a “virtual” focus group of approximately five teachers who will collectively discuss the survey items. The focus group discussion will be led by a researcher from Mathematica Policy Research and should last approximately one hour. The anticipated total time commitment will be approximately four hours (up to three hours to review the items and one hour for the focus group).

The focus groups will be audio-recorded so researchers can review the recordings later. No one else will hear the recordings. Your answers will be used only for statistical purposes and will not be disclosed or used, in identifiable form, for any other purpose except as required by law [the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002) 20 U.S.C., § 9573].

These focus groups are an important part of the MGLS:2017 instrument development process. Your comments, along with the comments of other mathematics educators, will help NCES refine the mathematics assessment and teacher questionnaires. As a thank you for your time and effort, you will be given a $75 Visa gift card for participating in the focus group session.

Thank you for your consideration in joining the MGLS:2017 educator focus groups. To acknowledge your voluntary participation, please sign the form below and return to <NAME> at Mathematica Policy Research, <ADDRESS>.

Respectfully,

< NAME>

Mathematica Policy Research

I hereby accept the terms described above and agree to participate voluntarily in the MGLS:2017 educator focus groups.

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Signature Date

I. Parent Informed Consent (for minor child)

Dear <NAME>

On behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, Decision Information Resources, Inc. (DIR) and Mathematica Policy Research are conducting voluntary interviews with 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students to support the development of assessment items and survey questions for the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17.

NCES would like to know if the assessment items and instructions are understandable to middle grade students and if the survey questions are clear and understood by all students. Your child will be asked to participate in an hour-long session at one of our corporate offices or in a community space close to you if you live more than 30 minutes from our offices. Participating students will be asked to do **one** of the following three activities. Students will not be graded on their responses.

* Answer a series of math assessment items with paper and pencil, then participate in a one-on-one interview with a researcher to provide feedback about whether the questions and instructions were clear, how familiar they are with the math items, and whether they understood the question being asked.
* Complete a few activities or games on a laptop or tablet computer to help us better understand how middle grade students organize, remember, and use information and then participate in a one-on-one interview with a researcher to provide feedback about the instructions and the tasks themselves.
* Answer a series of paper and pencil survey questions then participate in a one-on-one interview with a researcher to provide feedback about whether the questions were easy or hard to understand.

The student interviews will be audio- or video-recorded so study researchers can review the recordings later. No one else will hear or see the recordings. Participation is entirely voluntary and student answers will be used only for statistical purposes and will 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.C., § 9573].

The feedback received from students will provide NCES with valuable information to improve the student math assessment and refine the survey questions that will be included in the national research study. Your child will be given a $25 Visa gift card as a thank you for his or her time. In addition, you will be given a $20 Visa gift card if you bring the participating student to and from the interview site.

By signing below, you agree that your child may participate in this study. Your signature below will indicate that your questions have been answered satisfactorily, and that you have read and understood the information provided above.

Respectfully,

< NAME>

<Decision Information Resources/Mathematica Policy Research>

I hereby accept the terms described above and give permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to participate voluntarily in the MGLS:2017 student interviews.

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Signature Date

J. Parent Informed Consent (for parent interview)

DATE

Dear <NAME>

On behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, Decision Information Resources, Inc. (DIR) and Mathematica Policy Research are conducting voluntary interviews with parents and legal guardians of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students to support the development of parent survey questions for the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17.

Parent/legal guardian feedback will help NCES improve the survey so that all parents/legal guardians of middle grade students are able to understand the questions in the same way. The questions asked will relate to children’s education, behavior, and family life, including conversations about future planning, parent involvement with the school, and social skills and positive behaviors.The parent/legal guardian interviews will be conducted over the telephone or in-person during the student interview session and should last no more than 30 minutes. Reading through the materials and preparing for the call should take no more than 5 minutes. Parents/legal guardians will be provided with a set of survey questions to review independently prior to the interview and then will discuss the items with the interviewer during a later scheduled time.

The parent interviews will be audio-recorded so researchers can review the recordings later. No one else will hear the recordings. Participation is entirely voluntary and parent answers will be used only for statistical purposes and will 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.C., § 9573].

The parent interviews are an important part of the MGLS:2017 instrument development process. Your comments, along with the comments of other parents of middle grade students, will help NCES refine the parent questionnaire that will be used in the national research study. As a thank you for your time and effort, you will be given a $20 Visa gift card for participating in the parent interview session.

Thank you for your consideration in joining the MGLS:2017 parent interviews. To acknowledge your voluntary participation, please sign the form below and return to <NAME> at Decision Information Resources, <ADDRESS>.

Respectfully,

< NAME>

<Decision Information Resources >

I hereby accept the terms described above and agree to participate voluntarily in the MGLS:2017 parent interviews.

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Print Name

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Signature Date

K. Teacher/School Administrator Advertisement, on ED Letterhead



We are currently looking for middle school <math teachers/administrators> to help us review <math assessment items and survey questions/survey topics and items> for the MGLS:2017 national study. Your input will help to ensure that the MGLS:2017 instruments are clear and understandable to all <middle school students and math teachers/middle school administrators>.

DIR/Mathematica will provide a <$75/$25> gift card to each <math teacher/school administrator> that participates in a <teacher focus group/one-on-one telephone interview>. The < focus group/ telephone interview> will be scheduled outside of school hours and will take approximately <60 minutes/35 minutes>.

Decision Information Resources (DIR) and Mathematica Policy Research, two research companies located in Houston, TX and Washington, DC, are working with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, to design a new national longitudinal study called the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17 (or MGLS:2017) that will investigate how students learn and progress through the middle grades. This groundbreaking study is the first study of its kind to follow a nationally representative sample of 6th grade students through their 8th grade year in school. The study will collect information from students, parents, teachers, and school administrators about students’ educational experiences in the middle grades. The data from the study will inform parents, educators, and policymakers about how students grow and develop- academically and socially- in the middle grades.

If interested call: <CONTACT PHONE>

L. Appointment Confirmation



Thank you again for agreeing to participate in the <ACTIVITY>. Your <ACTIVITY> is scheduled for <DATE> at <TIME>. [Include location if confirming in-person student session.]

If you have any questions before your session, please call <CONTACT PHONE>. We look forward to working with you on this very important research project.

# M. Thank You Letter to Participating Administrators

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SUBJECT: Thank You for Participating

<DATE>

Dear <NAME>;

On behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, thank you for participating in the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17 (MGLS:2017) research interview. Your input helped us evaluate survey questions for the MGLS:2017. Your assistance, combined with input from other administrators, was incredibly useful and informative.

Enclosed, please find a $25 Visa gift card to thank you for your time and input. We appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely,

<CONTACT NAME>

Decision Information Resources

<CONTACT PHONE>

<CONTACT NAME>

Mathematica Policy Research

<CONTACT PHONE>

# N. Thank You Letter to Participating Teachers

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SUBJECT: Thank You for Participating

<DATE>

Dear <NAME>;

On behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, thank you for participating in the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17 (MGLS:2017) teacher focus group. Your input helped us evaluate test questions for the MGLS:2017 math assessment and refine survey questions to be asked of teachers participating in the national study. Your assistance, combined with input from other teachers, was incredibly useful and informative.

Enclosed, please find a $75 Visa gift card to thank you for your time and input. We appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely,

<CONTACT NAME>

Decision Information Resources

<CONTACT PHONE>

<CONTACT NAME>

Mathematica Policy Research

<CONTACT PHONE>

# O. Thank You Letter to Parents of Student Participants (no parent interview)

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Subject: Thank You for Your Participation

<DATE>

Dear <NAME>,

On behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, thank you for allowing <CHILD’S NAME> to participate in the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17 (MGLS:2017) research interview. <CHILD’S NAME>’s input helped us evaluate questions for the MGLS:2017. The assistance <he/she> provided, combined with input from other students, was incredibly useful and informative. We greatly appreciate you taking the time to bring <CHILD’S NAME> to and from the interview location to participate.

Enclosed, please find $45 in Visa gift cards ($25 for your child and $20 for you) as a thank you for your family’s participation. We appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely,

<CONTACT NAME>

Decision Information Resources

<CONTACT PHONE>

<CONTACT NAME>

Mathematica Policy Research

<CONTACT PHONE>

# P. Thank You Letter to Parents of Student Participants (with parent interview)

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Subject: Thank You for Your Participation

<DATE>

Dear <NAME>,

On behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, thank you for allowing <CHILD’S NAME> to participate in the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2016-17 (MGLS:2017) research interview. <CHILD’S NAME>’s input helped us evaluate questions for the MGLS:2017. The assistance <he/she> provided, combined with input from other students, was incredibly useful and informative. We greatly appreciate you taking the time to bring <CHILD’S NAME> to and from the interview location to participate. We also want to thank you for the valuable input you provided during the one-on-one interview about parent survey items. We will use your feedback, combined with comments from other parents, to refine the parent survey instrument before the national study.

Enclosed, please find $65 in Visa gift cards -- $45 to thank you for your child’s participation in the student interview ($25 for your child and $20 for your time transporting them to and from the interview session),and an additional $20 card for your participation in the parent interview. We appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely,

<CONTACT NAME>

Decision Information Resources

<CONTACT PHONE>

<CONTACT NAME>

Mathematica Policy Research

<CONTACT PHONE>