

**Task Order 27**  
**Study of Digital Learning Resources for**  
**Instructing English Learner Students**

**Task 4.5 (Part 18) Case Study — Case Study Correspondence**

**October 14, 2016**

Submitted to:  
U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development

Submitted by:  
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# Study of Digital Learning Resources for Instructing English Learner Students

## Task 4.5 (Part 18) Case Study — Case Study Correspondence

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## **National Study of English Learners and Digital Learning Resources (NSELD) Case Study: District Superintendent Notification Letter**

Dear [District Superintendent]:

Thank you for your district's participation in the *National Study of English Learners and Digital Learning Resources (NSELD)*. We greatly appreciate your contributions to the survey components of the study. You are contributing to an important initiative on the part of the U.S. Department of Education to understand more about how DLRs are being used in K-12 education for EL students in schools today, as well as to provide developers with advice on the design of DLRs with ELs. We are writing to invite your participation in the case study component of this project to further inform the study findings through your district's experience in use of DLRs.

### **What is the study's goal?**

The study is identifying the types of Digital Learning Resources (DLRs) used in instructing English learner (EL) students and the ways districts and teachers use DLRs to support EL students' second language learning of academic English and core academic content. The goals also include the development of a guide for educators to assist them in selecting and using DLRs in instructing EL students.

Your participation in the survey component of the study is already assisting the study to meet these goals. The case studies will provide additional depth and context for the survey findings. The case study findings will offer a window into better understanding how districts, schools, and teachers identify, select, and use DLRs with EL students.

### **What is my district being asked to do?**

The study includes case studies of six school districts serving ELs. As one of the case study districts, your district would agree to a three-day visit by our study staff, including interviews with district administrators and with staff at two schools. Our plan for each three-day case study includes:

- A two-person research team will visit your school district for three days at a time that works best for your district, ideally in February or March 2017.
- One day will be spent at the district office interviewing district administrators with responsibilities related to identifying, selecting, and supporting the use of DLRs and administrators familiar with services for EL students in your district.
- One day will be spent at each of two school sites. Our researchers will interview the principal, teachers of ELs, and any coordinator for EL services and/or technology coach, where present. We will also include one to two observations in the classrooms of teachers of ELs who are also frequent users of DLRs. Interviewed teachers will provide a brief demonstration of a DLR they use and its features and functions.

While it is always extra work to have visitors on campus, the study team is committed to doing everything in its power to minimize impact on your district. We will be flexible and work with you to set a date for the site visit within the study period that is convenient for you and will not interfere with other activities taking place in the district or in the selected two schools.



## How will this national study benefit my district?

The findings from the study will:

- inform the field and policy –makers to guide decision making on the use of DLRS;
- offer insights as to how DLR developers and practitioners could improve the usefulness of tools for teaching EL students; and
- lead to the development of two guides, one for educators and one for DLR developers.

A summary of the case study findings will be included in a report published by the U.S. Department of Education. In addition to the report, the research team will also produce two brief, field-focused guides for educators and technology developers on the design and use of DLRs with EL students, which will be shared with your district.

## Where can I obtain further information?

If you have any comments or questions regarding the study, please contact the Project Deputy Director, Philip Vahey, at 650-859-2143 or via email at [philip.vahey@sri.com](mailto:philip.vahey@sri.com). A member of the study team will be in touch shortly to discuss further details related to your participation in this important study.

While participation in this study is completely voluntary, your district's participation will be important to our fully informing the Department of Education. We hope that you will accept this invitation so that your experiences and insights can inform the development of these resources, and advance the design and use of DLRs with ELs. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Philip Vahey  
Deputy Director

Annette M. Zehler  
Project Director

Attached: Study Description

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Prior to being interviewed, all participants will be informed that their participation is voluntary and that their responses are confidential to the extent permitted by law. They will receive a consent form that describes the purposes of the data collection and outlines their privacy rights and the confidentiality of the data as described here. Responses to this data collection will be used to summarize findings in an aggregate manner (across groups of sites), or will be used to provide examples of program implementation in a manner that does not associate responses with a specific district or individual. In the report, pseudonyms will be used for each district. The study team may refer to the generic title of an individual (e.g., "district coordinator," or "school principal") but neither the district name nor the individual name will be used. All efforts will be made to keep the description of the district and schools general enough so that a reader would never be able to determine the true name or identity of the district or individuals at the site. The study team will make sure that access to all data with identifiable information is limited to members of the study team. The study team will not provide information that associates responses or findings with a subject or district to anyone outside the study team, and will protect or maintain confidentiality for data collected, except as required by law.

If you have any questions about the study, please call 1-855-241-7535. If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, please call the Westat Human Subjects Protections office at 1-888-920-7631. Please leave a message with your full name, the name of the study (*National Study of English Learners and Digital Learning Resources*), and a phone number beginning with the area code. A research office staff person will return your call as soon as possible.

**National Study of English Learners and Digital Learning Resources (NSELD)  
Case Study: District Interview Participant Email**

Dear [Administrator Name]:

I am writing to invite you to participate in a case study visit to your district for the *National Study of English Learners and Digital Learning Resources (NSELD)*, a study conducted for the U.S. Department of Education by Westat and SRI International. The attached document provides a brief description of the overall study.

Your district superintendent, [Name], has agreed to your district's participation in a three-day case study visit. To assist with the study, we are asking district administrators who have a role in decision-making and support related to DLR use in general and DLR use in instruction of EL students to participate in interviews during the visit to your district.

We would like to include you in the interviews to be conducted so that we can learn more about DLR use at [district/school] and your perspectives on DLRs, their use, and gaps in the field. The interview will last approximately an hour, and will cover topics related to the use of DLRs in instruction in general and in particular with ELs.

We hope that you will accept our invitation to participate so that your experiences and insights can be included and more fully inform the study findings. You will be contributing to an important initiative on the part of the U.S. Department of Education to understand more about how DLRs are being used in K-12 education for EL students in schools today. Thank you so much for considering our request. A member of the study team will be in touch shortly to discuss further details related to your participation in this study. In the meantime, please let me know if you have questions or need more information about the study.

Best,

Philip Vahey  
Deputy Director

Annette M. Zehler  
Project Director

Contact information

Attached: Study Description

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your participation is voluntary but is needed to ensure that the findings of the study are accurate. Your responses will represent many other districts that are similar to yours. Responses to this data collection will be used to summarize findings in an aggregate manner (across groups of sites), or will be used to provide examples of program implementation in a manner that does not associate responses with a specific district, school, or individual. In the report, pseudonyms will be used for each district and school. The study team may refer to the generic title of an individual (e.g., "district coordinator," or "school principal") but neither the site name nor the individual name will be used. All efforts will be made to keep the description of the district and school general enough so that a reader would never be able to determine the true name or identity of the site

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According to the *Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995*, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is xxxx-xxxx. Public reporting burden for this collection is estimated to average 60 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection. There is no obligation to respond to this collection; participation is voluntary. If you have comments or concerns about the status of your individual submission of this form, application, or survey, please contact [**Name and Contact Information**], U.S. Department of Education, Policy and Program Studies Service, 400 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20202, directly. (Note: Please do not return the completed instrument, form, application, or survey to this address.)

## **National Study of English Learners and Digital Learning Resources (NSELD) Case Study: School Principal Notification Letter**

Dear [Principal]:

I am writing to invite [school] to participate in an important national study of the use of Digital Learning Resources (DLRs) with English Learners (ELs). The purpose of *National Study of English Learners and Digital Learning Resources* (NSELD) is to provide an understanding of the current use of DLRs for instructing EL students and to provide guidance to developers and teachers around the design and use of DLRs for ELs. The study is being conducted by Westat and SRI International for the U.S. Department of Education.

### **What is my school being asked to do?**

We would like to invite you to participate in the case study component of this project. The goal of the case studies is to provide a window into understanding how districts, schools, and teachers identify, select, and use DLRs with EL students. Your school district superintendent, [Insert name here], has agreed to participate in this study.

As part of the case study in your district, a two-person research team will visit your school for one day, scheduled in winter 2017. While we are at your school, we will interview you, other administrators involved with the instruction of ELs and the use of DLRs (e.g., EL Coordinator or Lead Teacher or Technology coach), and one to three teachers (including mainstream teachers of ELs as well as EL specialists, if any). Additionally, we will conduct observations in the classroom of one teacher who uses DLRs in instruction.

While it is always extra work to have visitors on campus, the study team is committed to do everything in its power to minimize impact on your school. We will be flexible and work with you to set a date for the site visit within the study period that is convenient for you and will not interfere with other activities taking place at the school.

### **How will this national study benefit my school?**

The findings from the study will:

- inform the field and policy-makers to guide decision-making on the use of DLRS;
- offer insights as to how DLR developers and practitioners could improve the usefulness of tools for teaching EL students; and
- lead to the development of two guides, one for educators and one for DLR developers.

A summary of the case study findings will be included in a report published by the U.S. Department of Education, and the educator and developer guides will be shared with your district and school.

**Where can I obtain further information?**

If you have any comments or questions regarding the study, please contact the Project Deputy Director, Philip Vahey, at 650-859-2143 or via email at philip.vahey@sri.com. A member of the study team will be in touch shortly to discuss further details related to your participation in this important study.

We hope that you will accept this invitation so that your experiences and insights can inform the development of these resources, and advance the design and use of DLRs with ELs. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Philip Vahey  
Deputy Director

Annette M. Zehler  
Project Director

Contact information

Attached: Study Description

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Prior to being interviewed, all participants will be informed that their participation is voluntary and that their responses are confidential to the extent permitted by law. They will receive a consent form that describes the purposes of the data collection and outlines their privacy rights and the confidentiality of the data as described here. Responses to this data collection will be used to summarize findings in an aggregate manner (across groups of sites), or will be used to provide examples of program implementation in a manner that does not associate responses with a specific district, school, or individual. In the report, pseudonyms will be used for each district and school. The study team may refer to the generic title of an individual (e.g., "school principal," or "teacher") but neither the site name nor the individual name will be used. All efforts will be made to keep the description of the district or school general enough so that a reader would never be able to determine the true name or identity of the site or individuals at the site. The study team will make sure that access to all data with identifiable information is limited to members of the study team. The study team will not provide information that associates responses or findings with a subject, school, or district to anyone outside the study team, and will protect or maintain confidentiality for data collected, except as required by law.

If you have any questions about the study, please call 1-855-241-7535. If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, please call the Westat Human Subjects Protections office at 1-888-920-7631. Please leave a message with your full name, the name of the study (*National Study of English Learners and Digital Learning Resources*), and a phone number beginning with the area code. A research office staff person will return your call as soon as possible.

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**National Study of English Learners and Digital Learning Resources (NSELD)  
Case Study: School Participant Email**

Dear [Name]:

I am writing to invite you to participate in a case study visit to your district for the *National Study of English Leaders and Digital Learning Resources* (NSELD), a study conducted for the U.S. Department of Education, by Westat and SRI International. The attached document provides a brief description of the overall study.

[School District] and [School] have kindly agreed to participate in this study. Since you are [insert role here], we are interested in interviewing you to learn more about DLR use with ELs at your school. The interview will last approximately an hour, and will cover topics related to the use of DLRs in instruction, in particular with ELs.

[ADD only if also an observation participant: We are also interested in observing your classroom during a lesson in which you would use DLRs. The observation will last one class period.]

We hope that you will accept our invitation to participate so that your experiences and insights can be included and more fully inform the study findings. You will be contributing to an important initiative on the part of the U.S. Department of Education to understand more about how DLRs are being used in K-12 education for EL students in schools today. Thank you so much for considering our request. A member of the study team will be in touch shortly to discuss further details related to your participation in this study. In the meantime, please let me know if you have questions or need more information about the study.

Best,

Philip Vahey  
Deputy Director

Annette M. Zehler  
Project Director

Contact information

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