

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study,
Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)
Preschool Children's Parents Focus Groups

Volume I

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Submitted by
National Center for Education Statistics
U.S. Department of Education

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Attachments:

Attachment 1: Focus group recruitment screener and consent form

Attachment 2: Protocol materials (Moderator's guide (2-A), ECLS letter to parents (2-B), ECLS brochure (2-C), ECLS reports (2-D))

Justification

The following material is being submitted under the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) generic clearance agreement (OMB# 1850-0803), which provides NCES the capability to improve data collection instruments by conducting testing, such as usability tests, focus groups, and cognitive interviews, to improve methodologies, survey questions, and/or delivery methods.

NCES conducts the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS) program to provide descriptive data on the educational activities of the U.S. population. The ECLS program provides national data on children's status at birth and at various points thereafter; children's transitions to nonparental care, early education programs, and school; and children's experiences and growth through the eighth grade. The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023) will be the fourth cohort in the series of early childhood longitudinal studies that began with the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K) and continued with the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010-11 (ECLS-K:2011). The purpose of the ECLS-K:2023 will be to provide important information on children's early learning and development, preschool early care and education experiences, transition into kindergarten, and progress through the elementary grades, building upon knowledge acquired from the previous Early Childhood Longitudinal Studies. Data from the ECLS-K:2023 will yield policy-relevant information by (1) providing current data on the cohort of students to be selected in the early 2020's and their progress through the elementary grades, (2) providing data relevant to emerging policy related domains not measured fully in the prior ECLS studies, and (3) allowing cross-cohort comparisons of the educational experiences of children attending school before and after the advent of new federal laws and policies. The data collections will be carried out for NCES by Westat, with the Educational Testing Service (ETS) as the subcontractor developing the child assessments and Hager Sharp as the subcontractor developing the respondent communication materials.

As in its sister studies, the ECLS-K and the ECLS-K:2011, the ECLS-K:2023 is designed to provide data that can be used to analyze the relationships between a wide range of family, school, community, and individual variables and children's development, early learning, and performance in school. Information will be collected directly from the child, including the use of direct cognitive assessments with the children in reading and one other domain (likely math), and in the later rounds, child questionnaires. Information will also be collected from the child's parents/guardians, teachers, and school administrators. While all of these components will be included in the study, the ECLS-K:2023 will be designed such that the child will be the unit of analysis; the study will also be representative at the school level at the kindergarten year.

The ECLS-K:2023 will be a kindergarten cohort study (as such, "base year" for the study is considered the students' kindergarten year); however, the ECLS-K:2023 will go beyond its predecessor kindergarten cohort studies by adding a preschool round of data collection. In the spring of 2022, households in selected primary sampling units (PSUs) will be geocoded and screened for the presence of a 4- or 5-year-old child who will be in kindergarten the following fall, in which cases web surveys will be collected from the child's parent or guardian. These children will then be added to the cohort of 2022-23 kindergartners. Collecting parent data starting in preschool enables the study to measure influences on children before school entry, including their home environments and access to early care and education. The preschool data collection procedures will be field tested in spring 2020. A full OMB clearance package will be submitted for this field test in spring 2019.

This request is to conduct focus groups in spring and summer 2019 with parents of preschool children (i.e., children who will attend kindergarten in the next school year) to obtain feedback on study messages and materials that may be used in recruiting parents and their preschool children to participate in the ECLS-K:2023. NCES aims to increase parental participation in the study by ensuring the relevance, clarity, and ease of use of these materials. The focus groups will provide data to better understand both the barriers and benefits these types of respondents are likely to associate with participation in the ECLS-K:2023 and to identify communication strategies that may help overcome those barriers. The resulting information will guide parent recruitment strategies and tailored materials development for the ECLS-K:2023.

Design

On behalf of NCES, Hager Sharp will administer two in-person focus groups with parents of preschool children (i.e., children who will attend kindergarten in the next school year) to understand their perceptions of the study, how they would respond if selected to participate in the ECLS-K:2023, and whether there may be more effective language and/or visuals for study recruitment. Staff will conduct one focus group session at a focus group facility in Philadelphia, PA, and one in Westat's facility in Rockville, MD, to ensure geographic, racial/ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity among participants. A recruitment screener (see attachment 1) will be used to determine eligibility of participants. Once 10 eligible participants for each group are obtained, the group's session will be scheduled for spring/summer of 2019.

The research questions to be addressed during the focus groups are provided in attachment 2-A.

(Moderator's Guide). The following materials will be presented to parents during the focus groups to elicit feedback and suggestions (see attachment 2 for copies of all materials) after a more general guided discussion about how mail is handled in the household and their perceptions about the benefits associated with survey participation:

- ECLS envelope
- ECLS sample letter to parents
- ECLS brochure
- ECLS sample results reports

Each in-person focus group session will include 10 participants with varying demographic characteristics—a number that allows for in-depth collection of information. Topics of the discussion will focus on identifying the benefits participants associate with ECLS-K:2023 participation, the barriers they perceive to participating, which of the ECLS-K:2023 recruitment materials they believe would be most and least useful as well as suggested improvements to each, and their suggestions for factors that may increase response rates for the ECLS-K:2023. The focus group sessions will each last approximately 90 minutes.

A trained researcher working from a moderator's guide (attachment 2) will lead the participating parents through a discussion, and one to two team members will observe and take notes on the participants' comments and suggestions, which they will later compile into a summary report. The session will be video- and audio-recorded. The recordings will be destroyed as soon as the final report is finalized, and participant names will not be included in the report.

Recruiting and Paying Respondents

Hager Sharp will work with a local focus group facility in Philadelphia, PA (Schlesinger Research Associates) to recruit for and host one in-person focus group. Hager Sharp will work with Fieldwork, a national recruitment firm, to recruit participants for the focus group session at Westat's facility in Rockville, MD. Focus group recruiters will contact by telephone people from their databases and administer to them the recruitment screener (attachment 1) to identify those who meet the eligibility criteria, namely that they are a parent or legal guardian of at least one preschool child who will attend kindergarten or a kindergarten grade equivalent in the next school year. The recruiters will also gather basic demographic information from parent participants, including age and education level, and will work to ensure to the extent possible racial/ethnic and socioeconomic diversity among recruited parents/guardians.

To ensure the recruitment of participants who are representative of typical ECLS sample members and to thank them for their time and for participating in the focus group session, during recruitment each parent will be offered a \$100 incentive for participation. Each participant will receive a gift card for \$100 at the conclusion of the focus group.

Assurance of Confidentiality

The statement below will be read at the start of each focus group session and presented in all written participant materials, including on the consent form (attachment 1) that be collected from each participant

before the focus group. Participants will also be informed that they can leave the discussion at any time.

NCES is authorized to conduct this study by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543). All of the information you provide may be used only 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.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151).

All contractor staff working on the ECLS-K:2023 focus groups will sign an Affidavit of Nondisclosure. Personal information (e.g., name, address) of participants will be collected for recruitment purposes, but on the datafile used for analyses, respondents will be identified by first name only. Within 48 hours of respondents’ participation in the focus groups, the discussion notes will be edited, organized, and cleaned, and all direct identifiers will be stripped from the data set. All computer files will be password-protected and hard copies will be locked in secure locations (e.g., data will be in locked file cabinets within locked offices). Only staff working directly on the data analysis portion of the project will have access to the data files. Any presentations of data in reports will not include any portions of participants’ names, and once the final report is created, all personally identifiable information will be destroyed.

Estimate of Hour Burden

Recruitment of parents is estimated to take about 10 minutes per parent. It is expected that up to 60 parents will need to be contacted to form the desired focus groups of 20 participants total. Each focus group will take approximately 90 minutes to conduct. There is no cost to participants beyond the participation burden time. Table 1 provides the burden estimates for this study.

Table 1. Burden estimates for ECLS-K:2023 focus groups with parents

Respondent group	Number of respondents	Number of responses	Burden hours per respondent	Total burden hours
Parents – Recruitment	60	60	0.167	10
Parents – Focus Group Participation	20*	20	1.5	30
Total Burden	60	80		40

*Subset of initial contact group, not double counted in the total number of respondents.

Estimate of Cost Burden

There is no direct cost to respondents.

Project Schedule

The schedule of activities for the ECLS-K:2023 focus groups is provided in table 2.

Table 2. Schedule for the ECLS-K:2023 focus groups with parents

Activity	Tasks	Date ranges
Data collection	Recruit participants	March-April 2019
	Conduct in-person focus groups	March-early May 2019
Analysis	Analyze data and produce report	by May 2019
Report-out meeting	Meet with NCES and Westat to discuss findings and recommendations	by early June 2019

Cost to the Federal Government

The estimated cost to prepare for, administer, and report the results of the ECLS-K:2023 preschool parents focus groups is approximately \$16,500. This cost includes salaried labor for contractor staff and other direct costs associated with organization of the sessions.