

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study,  
Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Elementary School Administrator Focus Groups

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OMB #1850-0803 v.255

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

October 2019

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study,  
Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Focus Groups with Elementary School Administrators

# **Attachment 1**

## **Recruitment Screener**

OMB #1850-0803 v.255

Submitted by  
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U.S. Department of Education

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**The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Elementary School Administrators Focus Group Recruitment Screener**

Hello, my name is <INTERVIEWER'S NAME> from [RECRUITING COMPANY] and I am calling on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics, or NCES, the statistical center of the Department of Education. May I please speak with <school administrator's/principal's name>?

We are recruiting potential participants for a paid online focus group about how elementary school administrators or principals view their participation in education-related studies. We are not selling anything. We are simply interested in hearing your thoughts about education-related studies.

1. First, do you, or does any member of your household or immediate family, work for or is retired from:
- A market research company \_\_\_\_\_
  - A direct mail company or direct marketing company \_\_\_\_\_
  - An advertising agency or public relations firm \_\_\_\_\_
  - The media (TV/radio/newspapers/magazines) \_\_\_\_\_

[IF YES TO ANY >> THANK AND END]

2. Are you the school administrator or principal of an elementary school that includes kindergarten students?
- Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
[THANK AND END] No \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you make decisions about whether your school participates in voluntary studies, assessments, and/or research projects?
- Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
[THANK AND END] No \_\_\_\_\_

4. Please indicate the name of the school where you are school administrator or principal as well as the city and state where it is located.
- 

5. Is your school located in *a large city, a suburb near a large city, a small city or town, or a rural area*? [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST ONE RURAL SCHOOL PER GROUP]
- Large city \_\_\_\_\_  
Suburb of a large city \_\_\_\_\_  
Small city or town \_\_\_\_\_  
Rural area \_\_\_\_\_

6. Is your school a private school or a public school? [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST TWO PRIVATE SCHOOLS PER GROUP]
- Private \_\_\_\_\_  
Public \_\_\_\_\_

7. What grade levels does your school include? [RECRUIT A MIX]
- Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_

Kindergarten through 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Kindergarten through 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_

Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Please indicate your age range.

Under age 20 \_\_\_\_\_  
20-29 \_\_\_\_\_  
30-39 \_\_\_\_\_  
40-49 \_\_\_\_\_  
50-59 \_\_\_\_\_  
60-69 \_\_\_\_\_  
70 or over \_\_\_\_\_

9. So that we can be sure that participants of all backgrounds are represented in our focus group, please tell me your ethnic or racial background. Which of the following do you consider yourself to be? You may select more than one. [RECRUIT AT LEAST 2 PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS SOMETHING OTHER THAN “WHITE, NON-HISPANIC” PER GROUP] [MARK ALL THAT APPLY]

Hispanic or Latino \_\_\_\_\_  
White, Non-Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_  
Black or African American, Non-Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_  
Asian, Non-Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_  
Native Hawaiian-Indian or Other Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_  
American Indian or Alaska Native, Non-Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_

10. What is your gender?

Male \_\_\_\_\_  
Female \_\_\_\_\_

**Your opinions are very important to us and to thank you for your time if you participate in the focus group, we will give you a \$100 Amazon gift card as a token of our appreciation.**

We will send log-in and dial-in instructions for a session that will meet online at <<TIME>> on <<DATE>> with other elementary school administrators and principals to discuss elementary schools’ participation in education-related studies. During the meeting, we will describe this study and discuss your perceptions of it. We also want to learn how we might better word our materials and discussions when communicating with school administrators and principals about the study.

NCES is authorized to conduct this voluntary 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).

Would you be willing and available to participate in this discussion?

If YES, continue. If NO, thank and terminate.

**As I mentioned, we will give you a \$100 Amazon gift card as a token of our appreciation for your participation in this focus group discussion.** The discussion will last approximately 90 minutes. We will follow up with log-in and dial-in instructions for a session that will meet online at <<TIME>> on <<DATE>>. Additionally, we will send you a consent form to read, sign, and email back to us before the session.

PARTICIPANT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE/EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

[Message in case not available: Hello, I'm calling from [RECRUITING COMPANY] on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics, the statistical center of the Department of Education. We are recruiting participants for an online focus group about how people view participating in surveys. Your opinions are very important to us and, if you take part in the focus group, to thank you for your time, we will give you \$100 as a token of our appreciation. If you are interested, give us a call at < phone number > or email us at < >. Thank you. Goodbye.]

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study,  
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Focus Groups with Elementary School Administrators

## **Attachment 2**

### **Consent Form**

OMB #1850-0803 v.255

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

October 2019

**The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Elementary School Administrator Focus Group Consent Form**

**CONSENT FORM**

**PARTICIPATION IN A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an online focus group of school administrators and principals. Before dialing in to your focus group session, please fill out the consent form and email it to: [EMAIL]

**FOCUS GROUP PURPOSE**

A focus group will be held with elementary school administrators/principals about participation in education-related studies. The information obtained from this group will guide recruitment strategies for an upcoming early childhood education study in an effort to improve participation rates and collect valid data on education across the United States.

**AGENCY CONDUCTING THE STUDY**

This project is being conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which is part of the U.S. Department of Education. Representatives from Hager Sharp, an independent communications firm, will administer the focus group sessions.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

NCES is authorized to conduct this voluntary 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).

Audio and video recordings will be used to write a summary report of what we learn through this focus group. Your name will not be included in the report, and the recordings will be destroyed once the report is written.

**QUESTIONS**

If you have any questions about the discussion group, please call [NAME] of Hager Sharp at [PHONE NUMBER].

**CONSENT**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in this focus group.

---

SIGNATURE

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study,  
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Elementary School Administrators Focus Groups

## **Attachment 3**

### **Protocol (Moderator's Guide)**

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## **Attachment 3. Moderator's Guide**

### **Elementary School Administrators Focus Group**

#### **Research Questions:**

- How do elementary school administrators and principals decide to participate in a voluntary survey or study, such as the ECLS?
  - What factors do they consider?
  - Whose opinions do they consider when deciding whether to participate?
- What value do elementary school administrators and principals perceive the ECLS has in education?
- What can set the ECLS apart from the other studies or assessments school administrators and principals are recruited for and/or participating in?
- What will motivate school administrators and principals to participate in the ECLS-K:2023? What benefits do elementary school administrators and principals perceive come from participating in the ECLS-K:2023?
- What are the main obstacles to participation in the ECLS-K:2023 and what can we do to overcome them?
- How does the value of the study and its contribution to the field of education factor into a school administrator's or principal's decision to participate?
- How does the format and duration of the study factor into a school administrator's or principal's decision to participate?
- How does the monetary incentive and promise of future monetary incentives factor into a school administrator's and principal's decision to participate?
- What information should be included in the initial recruitment materials?
  - What types of materials should be included in the initial recruitment package?
  - How much detail should be provided in the initial recruitment package?
  - What do they need to hear from the study to motivate them to participate? What language and/or messages will help school administrators understand the importance of the ECLS-K:2023 and the importance of their participation?
  - Are there specific endorsements for the materials that would influence school administrators and principals to participate in the study? Are there any endorsements that would make them less likely to respond?
  - How much should we emphasize language or visuals about the Department of Education? IES? NCES?
  - What recommendations do school administrators and principals have for making the recruitment package visually interesting and requiring attention, as opposed to looking like materials that are likely to be discarded?
- How can we develop a clear, compelling, relevant, and motivating initial notification letter?
- How can we develop a clear, compelling, relevant, and motivating brochure?
- How can we develop a clear, compelling, relevant, and motivating fact sheet?
- How can we develop other clear, compelling, relevant, and motivating materials?

#### **INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)**

- My name is [MODERATOR] and I work for Hager Sharp, an independent communications company conducting this focus group on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which is the statistical center of the U.S. Department of Education.

Today you are participating in a focus group session for school administrators and principals. A focus group allows us to talk with people and learn more about what they think than when using other methods, such as surveys. We are looking to get your honest opinions. I will be asking questions meant to generate discussion. There are no right or wrong answers. I encourage you to express your opinion even if it might be different from other participants'. We want all viewpoints – positive, negative, and everything in between. We do not have to come to any agreement on what we talk about. Everyone's opinion is important, so I would like to hear from each of you. We will be audio and video recording the session so that I have notes for my report. Once the report is written we will destroy the recordings.

Your feedback will be used only for the purposes of our report and will not be used for any other purpose except as required by law. No names or any other personally identifiable information will appear in the summary report. If at any time you decide you do not want to continue, you may choose to stop. Before we begin, do you have any questions about what I just said?

Draft materials will be presented along with other information. I want to point out that I did not develop these materials, so you will not flatter me or insult me by anything that you say. My job is simply to ensure that we cover everything that we need to and to help keep the discussion moving. I have no stake in the outcome of the discussion.

I'd like everyone to introduce themselves. Let me start. (MODERATOR INTRO.) Now, tell me about yourself. When you do, please be sure to tell me your name (first name is okay) and anything else you'd like to tell us about yourself.

### **GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF VOLUNTARY STUDIES (5 MINUTES)**

Today we'll be talking about a voluntary early childhood education study that is conducted in elementary schools across the United States. Before we discuss the study in detail, I'd like to hear generally about how you decide whether or not to participate in education studies.

- When you are asked to have your staff or students participate in a voluntary study, what is your initial reaction? What factors do you consider? Do certain factors matter more or less in your decision to participate?
- Whose opinions and interests do you consider when deciding to have your staff and students participate? Do certain stakeholders' opinions or interests factor more or less in your decision? Who are those stakeholders?
- What factors would make you more likely to agree to have your school participate in a voluntary study?

### **GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF ECLS (8 MINUTES)**

Now I'd like for us to focus on the specific study program we'll be talking about today, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study or ECLS.

- Has anyone heard of the ECLS before? What have you heard, or what do you know about the study?

Let me tell you a bit about the ECLS. The ECLS program is composed of a set of studies conducted by the U.S. Department of Education. Each time a new ECLS is conducted, the study is designed so that the participants are a nationally representative sample of kindergarten students and their parents, teachers, and

principals. The next ECLS will collect data once in preschool, twice in kindergarten, and once a year in first grade, third grade, and fifth grade, following the same group of students as they progress through those grades over the years. The preschool round is a little different, but starting in kindergarten, students will be assessed in reading and math during one-on-one sessions in schools with trained study assessment administrators. Parents, teachers, and principals will be asked to complete online surveys to answer questions about children's experiences and learning environments. Participants receive a monetary incentive each time they complete a round of the study. The goal of the study is to improve our understanding of how family, school, community, and individual factors relate to children's development and learning.

With this information, I'd like your general feedback on the study.

- What additional questions do you have about the study after this description?
- What do you believe is the value of the ECLS? How does it contribute to the field of education?
- What sets the ECLS apart from other studies or assessments you're recruited for or participating in? Alternatively, how is it the same?

### **BENEFITS AND BARRIERS FOR PARTICIPATION OF ECLS (15 MINUTES)**

Now let's imagine you've been asked to have some of your staff and students participate in the study.

- Knowing what you do about the study, how likely would you be to have your staff and students participate in the study? Why?
- What would motivate you to allow your staff and students to participate?
- What benefits do you believe could come from participating in the study?
  - For you?
  - For your staff?
  - For parents?
  - For selected students?
- Which of these benefits is most important to you?
- What would be the main obstacles that would keep you from having your staff or students participate in the study?
- How does the value of the study and its contribution to the field of education factor into your decision to participate? Is that an important factor in your decision?
- How does the format and duration of the study (i.e., that the study happens during school hours and for several years) factor into your decision to participate? Is that an important factor in your decision?
- How does the monetary incentive and promise of future monetary incentives factor into your decision to participate? Is that an important factor in your decision?
  - What level of monetary incentive would you expect your school to receive for participating in the ECLS?

- Are there any other factors that would encourage or discourage you from participating in the ECLS? [PROBE: needing school space, pulling the students out of classes for the assessments]
- Is there anything that may change your mind about participating in the ECLS?
  - Would something about the survey need to change? What? (PROBE FOR duration, access, time required, etc.)
- If *one* thing could change about the ECLS-K:2023, what would be most important to change in order to increase the likelihood that you would participate in the study?
- Are there any other concerns or reactions we haven't discussed that would influence your decision to participate?

## **RECRUITMENT MATERIALS FOR ECLS (50 MINUTES)**

Next, we'd like to spend some time talking about the materials elementary school administrators or principals would receive when they are asked to participate in the study.

- What would be the best way for the U.S. Department of Education to reach you to let you know your school has been selected for the study?
- If the Department's initial notification comes via mail, how could they make sure you receive it and pay attention to it? What would make you likely to open the mail? (PROBE for size of envelope, logos, should it be colorful or look like business, etc.)
- How many and what types of materials do you think should be included in the initial recruitment materials? Would you prefer to only receive a letter and review the rest of the information online, or would you prefer to receive a letter a few materials? (PROBE for quantity and type)
- How much detail should be provided in the initial recruitment materials?
- What language and/or messages are important to emphasize so school administrators and principals understand the importance of the study and their participation?
- Are there specific endorsements for the materials that would influence your decision to participate? Are there endorsements that would make you less likely to respond or participate? [PROBE: education associations, federal/state/local government agencies, others?]
- How much should we emphasize language or visuals about the U.S. Department of Education's role in the study? How much should we emphasize IES and NCES? Does the Department of Education's role in the study motivate you to have your staff and students participate in the study?

Let's talk specifically about the envelope and notification letter.

- What recommendations do you have for making the initial envelope with recruitment materials stand out as something that requires your attention? If someone else opens your mail, how can we make sure they know it requires your attention?
- What would be your recommendations for developing a clear, compelling, relevant, and

motivating initial notification letter?

[SHOW THE ECLS LETTER TO ADMINISTRATORS AND GIVE THEM TIME TO REVIEW.]

- Here is an example of a letter you might receive about your school's selection for the study. You may receive additional materials with the letter, but we want to discuss the letter first.
  - What are your general reactions?
  - What are your thoughts on the length of the letter?
  - What are your thoughts on the formality of the letter? Is it too formal? Would you prefer something that is friendlier?
  - Is it clear? How can it be clearer?
  - Is it compelling? How can it be more compelling?
    - Are there specific phrases or sections that are more or less compelling?
  - Is it relevant? Can it be more relevant?
  - Is it motivating? Can it be more motivating?
  - Does it provide enough detail? Too much detail?
  - What are your thoughts on the visuals? Are they appealing?
  - Does the letter stand out as something that isn't an advertisement or a promotion? Is there something we can do differently to make it stand out as something you need to pay attention to?
  - What are your reactions to the list of endorsements? Which of those endorsements are most meaningful to you and why? Which are the least meaningful and why?
  - Would it be motivating for you to see examples of study findings in the letter?
  - Should the letter include a description of the longitudinal nature of the ECLS? Is that information more appropriate for materials that may come with the letter?
  - Is there any other feedback you have on the letter?

Now let's talk about materials that might come along with the letter.

- How many materials would you recommend sending along with a letter similar to what you just received?
- What would be your recommendations for developing clear, compelling, relevant, and motivating materials?

[SHOW ECLS-K:2011 BROCHURE AND GIVE THEM TIME TO REVIEW.]

- Here is an example of a brochure. This brochure was developed for the last ECLS study that began in 2010-11. We are getting information from you to inform the development of a brochure for the new ECLS study.
  - What are your general reactions?
  - Is it clear? How can it be clearer?
  - Is it compelling? How can it be more compelling?
  - Is it relevant to you as a school administrator or principal? How can it be more relevant?
  - Is it motivating to you as a school administrator or principal? How can it be more motivating?
  - Does it provide enough detail? Too much detail?
  - What are your thoughts on the visuals? Are they appealing?

- Is there any other feedback you have on the brochure?

[SHOW ECLS PROGRAM BROCHURE AND GIVE THEM TIME TO REVIEW.]

- Here is an example of a different brochure. This brochure was developed for the ECLS program overall. We would like to get your opinions about how this brochure compares with the brochure we just saw.
  - What are your general reactions?
  - Is it clear? How can it be clearer?
  - Is it compelling? How can it be more compelling?
  - Is it relevant to you as a school administrator or principal? How can it be more relevant?
  - Is it motivating to you as a school administrator or principal? How can it be more motivating?
  - Does it provide enough detail? Too much detail?
  - What are your thoughts on the visuals? Are they appealing?
  - Is there any other feedback you have on the brochure?

[SHOW ECLS FACT SHEET AND GIVE THEM TIME TO REVIEW.]

- Here is an example of a fact sheet we are providing to preschool parents who have been selected for the ECLS-K:2023 study.
  - What are your general reactions?
  - As a school administrator or principal, would you prefer to receive something like this or the brochure we reviewed earlier? Is there a different type of material you would prefer to receive, such as something that answers frequently asked questions?
  - Is it clear? How can it be clearer?
  - Is it compelling? How can it be more compelling?
  - Is it relevant? Can it be more relevant?
  - Is it motivating? Can it be more motivating?
  - Does it provide enough detail? Too much detail?
  - What are your thoughts on the visuals? Are they appealing?
  - Is there any other feedback you have on the fact sheet?

Let's talk about the package as a whole now.

- Based on the materials that you read and anything else that you may know about the ECLS-K:2023, how would you react if you were asked to participate?
  - Is there additional information you would need or want in order to decide whether or not to participate (PROBE for use of school space, confidentiality assurance, time to complete, sample procedures, how the information will be used)?
  - How helpful would it be to have access to a short video that provides an overview of the ECLS-K:2023? How likely would you be to watch a video like this?
  - If the video and recruitment materials included school administrators and teachers who have participated in previous ECLS studies and have had positive experiences, would this make you more likely to agree to participate?
  - What would be most helpful to you in deciding to participate?

- o Of all the materials we have reviewed, what would motivate you the most to allow your staff and students to participate?
- o Of all the materials we have reviewed, which one(s) would you recommend including in the initial notification package? Is there something else we haven't reviewed that you would suggest including (based on experiences with other assessments or studies)?
- o Would any additional resources be helpful for encouraging your participation?
- o Where would you go to get additional information about the ECLS-K:2023? What would be most convenient for you?

### **CONCLUSIONS (2 MINUTES)**

- Do you have any additional comments about communications about the study or the ECLS-K:2023 in general? Thank you.

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study,  
Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Focus Groups with Elementary School Administrators

**Attachment 4**

**ECLS Letter to Administrators**

OMB #1850-0803 v.255

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

October 2019



## Attachment 4. ECLS Letter to Administrators Focus Group with Elementary School Administrators



### Endorsed by:

- AASA, The School Superintendents Association
- Alliance for Excellent Education
- American Federation of Teachers
- American Montessori Society
- Association for Middle Level Education
- Association Montessori International/USA
- Association of Christian Schools International
- Association of Christian Teachers and Schools
- Christian Schools International
- Council for Exceptional Children
- Council of Chief State School Officers
- International Literacy Association
- Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Independent Schools
- National Catholic Educational Association
- National Christian School Association
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
- National Institute for Early Education Research
- National Parent-Teacher Association
- National School Boards Association
- National Science Teachers Association
- Texas State Teacher's Association
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Dear [PRINCIPAL]:

The U.S. Department of Education is conducting an important national research study that will help guide education policy in the United States, called the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS). The earlier ECLS studies have been important sources of data to help educators, parents, and policymakers better understand key issues related to children's development and learning including literacy in the home, the teaching of reading and mathematics, and the associations between physical exercise, childhood obesity, and well-being.

We are contacting you because your school has been selected to take part in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten Class of 2023 (ECLS-K:2023) in the 2022-23 school year.

- A sample of your kindergarten students will complete individual assessments in reading and math with trained assessors. Each assessment will last approximately one hour.
- Parents of participating students will provide information about their children and their families' demographics and educational activities.
- Teachers of participating students will complete a brief survey about their teaching practices, the children's classrooms, and the children's skills and knowledge.
- School administrators or principals will complete a brief survey about their backgrounds and features of their school and programs at the school.

Participation in this study is voluntary; however, I encourage your school's participation. Your input is extremely valuable. Not all schools were selected to participate. Your school's experiences represent many other schools in the United States and cannot be replaced.

In appreciation for your time and efforts, your school will receive \$300, and participating school staff also will receive a monetary token of our appreciation.

The National Center for Education Statistics at the U.S. Department of Education is working with Westat, a research organization, to conduct the ECLS-K:2023. Within the next few days, a representative from Westat will contact you about participating in this important study. We are asking you to identify a staff member at your school to act as a liaison with the ECLS-K:2023 team and facilitate the activities in the school that are part of the study.

If you have questions, please feel free to call Westat toll-free at 1-888-204-4864 or send an email to [ECLSKHELP@westat.com](mailto:ECLSKHELP@westat.com). You can also find more information at <https://nces.ed.gov/ecls/>.

Thank you for your support of the ECLS-K:2023.

Sincerely,

James Lynn Woodworth  
Commissioner  
National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences



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of Edu

*The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is authorized to conduct the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS) by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543). The data are being collected for NCES by Westat, a U.S.-based research organization. All of the information you provide may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed or used in*