

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

Volume I

OMB #1850-0803 v.255

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

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Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Recruitment screener
- Attachment 2: Participant consent form
- Attachment 3: Protocol (moderator's guide)
- Attachment 4: ECLS letter to administrators
- Attachment 5: ECLS-K:2011 brochure
- Attachment 6: ECLS program brochure
- Attachment 7: ECLS fact sheet

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 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 child who will be in kindergarten the following fall, in which cases web surveys (with a paper survey option) 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 for this field test began the clearance process in July 2019 (OMB #1850-0750 v.19).

Recruitment and retention for the ECLS-K:2023 creates a unique challenge. Although the research community will understand the value of this study, school administrators, educators, and parents are likely to present challenges to implementation. School administrators and teachers are often over-committed and may be unwilling to spend time answering questionnaires. They will have their own expectations about the value of the ECLS-K:2023, and recruitment materials will need to address these expectations. In addition, school administrators and teachers are essential intermediaries for parents and students and, therefore, are best positioned to ensure the success of the study. The proposed research is intended to gain a better

understanding of these and other factors in an effort to improve recruitment materials for the ECLS-K:2023 and, ultimately, support a successful implementation of the study.

This request is to conduct online focus groups in fall 2019 with elementary school administrators to better understand both the barriers and benefits that school administrators are likely to associate with participation in the ECLS-K:2023 and to identify communication strategies that may help overcome these barriers. The focus groups will also provide feedback on study messages and materials that may be used in recruiting schools to participate in the ECLS-K:2023. NCES aims to increase participation in the national ECLS-K:2023 study by ensuring the relevance, clarity, and ease of use of these materials. The resulting information from the fall 2019 focus groups will guide recruitment strategies and tailored materials development for the ECLS-K:2023.

Design

On behalf of NCES, Hager Sharp will administer two online focus groups with elementary school administrators to understand their perceptions of the ECLS-K:2023, how they would respond if selected to participate in the study, and whether there may be more effective language and/or visuals for study recruitment than have been currently developed. Staff will conduct both focus groups through an online platform such as WebEx. Once ten eligible participants for each group are obtained, the group's session will be scheduled for October-November 2019.

The research questions to be addressed during the focus groups are provided in attachment 3 (Protocol: moderator's guide). The following materials will be presented to school administrators during the focus groups to elicit feedback and suggestions after a more general guided discussion about their perceptions about the benefits associated with participation in education studies and assessments:

- ECLS letter to administrators (see attachment 4)
- ECLS-K:2011 brochure (see attachment 5)
- ECLS program brochure (see attachment 6)
- ECLS fact sheet (see attachment 7)

Each online focus group session will include ten 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 sample 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. Each focus group session will last approximately 90 minutes. There is no difference in content, procedure, or purpose between the two focus groups. A trained researcher working from a moderator's guide (attachment 3) will lead the participating school administrators 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 Potential Participants and Paying Participants

Hager Sharp will work with a national recruitment firm (Fieldwork National) to recruit for both groups. Focus group recruiters will contact by telephone people from their database and administer to them the recruitment screener (attachment 1) to identify those who meet the eligibility criteria, namely that they are an administrator of an elementary school. To populate the database, Fieldwork National reaches potential participants by sending out an email blast to individuals with specified demographics. The email includes a link to a programmed prescreener. Fieldwork National phone screens those who respond to the link to qualify participants for the database. They use the same method of prescreening by posting the link to the prescreener in social media outreach. They tailor the social media outreach based on the demographics they

want to reach, and then phone screen the people who respond to the link. They do not add anyone to their database without the individual’s permission. To recruit participants to the ECLS focus groups, Fieldwork National will decide who to call from their database based on criteria included in the recruitment screener (attachment 1), filtering the potential participants using demographic characteristics that they have already gathered in the database. They then will use the recruitment screener to fully screen potential participants and confirm they meet the eligibility criteria. Fieldwork National will recruit to ensure that participants reflect diversity in geographic regions, urban/suburban/rural areas, school configuration (e.g., K-5/K-6, K-8), and school type (e.g., private or public).

To ensure the recruitment of participants who are representative of typical ECLS-K:2023 school administrator sample members and to thank them for their time and for participating in the focus group session, as in prior NCES studies, during recruitment each school administrator will be offered a \$100 Amazon gift card for participation.

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 2) that be collected from each participant before the focus group. Participants will also be informed that they can leave the discussion at any time.

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 Hager Sharp, 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 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 for the project. 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 an ID number only. Within 48 hours of the focus groups’ completion, the discussion notes will be edited, organized, and cleaned, and all direct identifiers will be stripped from the data set. All computer files used for this study work will be stored on secure, project-specific network drives. 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 school administrators is estimated to take about 10 minutes per individual. It is expected that up to 60 administrators 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 elementary school administrators

Participant group	Number of participants	Number of responses	Burden hours per participant	Total burden hours
School Administrators – Recruitment of Potential Participants	60	60	0.167	10
School Administrators – 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 participants.

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 elementary school administrators

Activity	Tasks	Date ranges
Data collection	Recruit participants	October-November 2019
	Conduct two online focus groups	November 2019
Analysis	Analyze data and produce report	November-December 2019
Report-out meeting	Meet with Westat and Hager Sharp to discuss findings and recommendations	December 2019

Cost to the Federal Government

The estimated cost to prepare for, administer, and report the results of the ECLS-K:2023 elementary school administrator focus groups is approximately \$7,300. This cost includes salaried labor for contractor staff and other direct costs associated with organization of the sessions.