

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

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OMB #1850-0803 v.264

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

March 2020

# **Elementary School Administrators**

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

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 U.S. Department of Education. May I please speak with <school administrator's/principal's name>?

We are recruiting elementary school administrators or principals for a paid online focus group about how they view their school and students' participation in education studies. We are not selling anything. We are simply interested in hearing from you what factors you consider when deciding whether or not to have your school and students participate in an education study.

1. Are you the school administrator or principal of an elementary school that includes kindergarten students?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
[THANK AND END] No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you make decisions about whether your school participates in voluntary studies, assessments, and/or research projects?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
[THANK AND END] No \_\_\_\_\_

3. 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.

School Name \_\_\_\_\_  
School City \_\_\_\_\_  
School State \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many people live the city or town where your school is located? [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST ONE SCHOOL IN A COMMUNITY OF 50,000 OR LESS PER GROUP]

More than 250,000 people \_\_\_\_\_  
50,000 to 250,000 people \_\_\_\_\_  
Less than 50,000 \_\_\_\_\_

5. Is your school a private school or a public school? [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST TWO PRIVATE SCHOOLS PER GROUP]

Private \_\_\_\_\_  
Public \_\_\_\_\_

6. What grade levels does your school include? [RECRUIT A MIX]

Pre-K/Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Pre-K/Kindergarten through 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Pre-K/Kindergarten through 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7. How many students attend your school? [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST ONE SCHOOL SERVING MORE THAN 500 STUDENTS]

More than 500 students \_\_\_\_  
250-500 students \_\_\_\_  
Less than 250 students \_\_\_\_

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 an education study. During the meeting, we will describe the study and discuss your perceptions of it. We also want to learn how the study can improve communication materials for school administrators and principals.

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 U.S. Department of Education. We are recruiting participants for an online focus group about how school administrators decide whether or not to participate in education studies. Your opinions are very important to us and, if you take part in the focus group, we will give you a \$100 Amazon gift card 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, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Elementary School Administrators Focus Group Recruitment Screener, In-person**

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 U.S. Department of Education. May I please speak with <school administrator's/principal's name>?

We are recruiting elementary school administrators or principals for a paid in-person focus group about how they view their school and students' participation in education studies. We are not selling anything. We are simply interested in hearing from you what the you consider when deciding whether or not to have your school and students participate in an education study.

1. Are you the school administrator or principal of an elementary school that includes kindergarten students?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
[THANK AND END] No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you make decisions about whether your school participates in voluntary studies, assessments, and/or research projects?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
[THANK AND END] No \_\_\_\_\_

3. Please indicate the name of the school where you are school administrator or principal.

School Name \_\_\_\_\_  
School City \_\_\_\_\_  
School State \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many people live the city or town where your school is located? [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST ONE SCHOOL IN A COMMUNITY OF 50,000 OR LESS PER GROUP]

More than 250,000 people \_\_\_\_\_  
50,000 to 250,000 people \_\_\_\_\_  
Less than 50,000 \_\_\_\_\_

5. Is your school a private school or a public school? [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST TWO PRIVATE SCHOOLS PER GROUP]

Private \_\_\_\_\_  
Public \_\_\_\_\_

6. What grade levels does your school include? [RECRUIT A MIX]

Pre-K/Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Pre-K/Kindergarten through 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Pre-K/Kindergarten through 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7. How many students attend your school? [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST ONE SCHOOL SERVING MORE THAN 500 STUDENTS]

More than 500 students \_\_\_\_\_

250-500 students \_\_\_\_\_

Less than 250 students \_\_\_\_\_

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 would like to meet at [FACILITY ADDRESS] at <<TIME>> on <<DATE>> with other school administrators to discuss elementary schools’ participation in an education study. During the meeting, we will describe the study and discuss your perceptions of it. We also want to learn how the study can improve communication materials for school administrators and principals.

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 meet at [FACILITY ADDRESS] at <<TIME>> on <<DATE>>.

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 U.S. Department of Education. We are recruiting participants for an in-person focus group about how school administrators decide whether or not to participate in education studies. 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 a \$100 Amazon gift card 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, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Elementary School Administrators Focus Group Consent Form, Online**

**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 studies. The information obtained from this group will guide recruitment strategies for an upcoming early childhood education study to improve participation rates 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 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, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Elementary School Administrators Focus Group Consent Form, In-person**

**CONSENT FORM**

**PARTICIPATION IN A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an in-person focus group of school administrators and principals.

**FOCUS GROUP PURPOSE**

A focus group will be held with elementary school administrators/principals about participation in education studies. The information obtained from this group will guide recruitment strategies for an upcoming early childhood education study to improve participation rates 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**

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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, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023) Elementary School Administrators Focus Group Protocol (Moderator's Guide)**

### **Research Questions:**

- What messages and statements motivate school administrators and principals to allow their staff and students to participate in the study? Are there messages and statements that would discourage school administrators and principals from participating and allowing their staff and students to participate?
  - Are the ECLS data findings relevant and motivating?
  - Are the examples of how the ECLS data have been used for secondary research relevant and motivating?
  - Are the examples of how the ECLS results have been discussed in the media relevant and motivating?
  - Are the examples of how the ECLS results have informed policy relevant and motivating?
  - Why are these messages or statements motivating or not motivating?
- What are elementary school administrators and principals' reactions to the revised notification package messages and materials?
  - What are school administrators' and principals' reactions to the initial notification letter and overview fact sheet?
  - Are the materials clear, relevant, and motivating?
  - Are the materials helpful or informative for school administrators and principals as they are working with students?
  - What modifications could be made to improve the materials?
- What factors do school administrators and principals give as reasons for why they would participate in the study and allow their staff and students to participate?
- What factors do school administrators and principals give as reasons for why they would not participate in the study or allow their staff and students to participate?

### **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 provides the opportunity 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 others. 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/or video] recording the session, so I have the most accurate notes possible 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?

Sample letters and handouts 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 keep the discussion moving along. 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 say your name (first name only is okay) and anything else you'd like to tell us about yourself. Please also confirm verbally that you consent to participate in the focus group.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE ECLS (5 MINUTES)**

Today we'll be focusing on a study program conducted by the U.S. Department of Education called the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study or the 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 includes a set of four voluntary studies that examine child development, school readiness, and early school experiences over time. The ECLS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics within the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences.

- The ECLS kindergarten studies include nationally representative samples of kindergartners and also collect information from students' parents, teachers, and principals. Because the studies are longitudinal, they follow the same group of students over several years.
- ECLS program studies have been conducted four times since the 1990s.
- The next ECLS will focus on students who are in kindergarten in 2022. It will collect information about students twice in kindergarten, and once a year in first grade, third grade, and fifth grade. Information will also be collected about a sample of students in prekindergarten via online surveys.
  - Approximately 20,000 students, from about 1,000 schools across the country, will be asked to participate. In each school, approximately 24 kindergarten students will be randomly selected to participate.
  - Starting in kindergarten, students will participate in 45-minute, one-on-one sessions with trained ECLS staff to measure their math and reading skills. The sessions will happen in schools over 1-3 days in each phase of the study.
  - Parents, teachers, and principals will be asked to complete online surveys to answer questions about children's skills, experiences, and/or learning environments. For example, the surveys include questions about children's math, reading, and social skills; what classroom activities and resources are available to students; and how schools engage parents.
- Participating schools, teachers, and families receive a monetary incentive each time they complete a round of the study.

## **STATEMENTS ABOUT THE VALUE OF THE ECLS (45 MINUTES)**

We've conducted focus groups with school administrators and parents about the ECLS to get their feedback on materials they might receive as a potential participant. The most common piece of feedback we've received is that, as potential ECLS participants, they would like more information about the types of results that are available and how those findings have been or can be used to improve education for students. We've compiled several different examples of information, and we'd like your feedback on which of these is most meaningful to you as a school administrator and would most likely motivate you to allow your school to

participate in the study. Our goal is to determine which examples are most motivating so that we can create additional materials focused on that information for potential participants.

The first set of examples we want to share with you are findings from the ECLS reports produced by the U.S. Department of Education.

[SHOW DATA FINDINGS] (see Attachment 6)

- What are your general reactions?
- Are these findings helpful or informative for you and your teachers as you're working with students and parents? Why or why not?
- What are your reactions to the fact that these are older results? Is the information still helpful?
- Does the ECLS seem more valuable to you knowing these types of results will be provided to you? Do these findings motivate you to allow your school, teachers, and students to participate in the study? Why or why not?
  - If not, is there another type of finding that might motivate you?
- If you had to choose one finding as being the most motivating as you decide whether or not to participate, which would it be? Why?

Next, we want to share with you examples of how the ECLS data have been used by researchers. The data are frequently cited in research papers, journal articles, conference presentations, and more to provide insights into various education topics.

[SHOW STATEMENTS ABOUT SECONDARY RESEARCH] (see Attachment 6)

- What are your general reactions?
- Are these research topics helpful or informative for you and your teachers as you're working with students and parents? Why or why not?
  - Is it helpful for you to know NCES provides a bibliography tool that you can use to find studies like these?
- Does the ECLS seem more valuable to you knowing that the findings were cited in these research studies? Does that motivate you to allow your school, teachers, and students to participate in the study? Why or why not?
  - If not, is there another type of research study that might motivate you?
- If you had to choose one research topic as being the most motivating as you decide whether or not to participate, which would it be? Why?

Now we want to share with you examples of how the ECLS results are cited by the media. These are all examples of articles that share results from the ECLS or research based on the ECLS.

[SHOW STATEMENTS ABOUT MEDIA REFERENCES] (see Attachment 6)

- What are your general reactions?
- Are these media references helpful or informative for you and your teachers as you're working with students and parents? Why or why not?
- Does the ECLS seem more valuable to you knowing that the study and research based on it are cited in the media? Does that motivate you to allow your school, teachers, and students to participate in the study? Why or why not?
  - If not, is there another type of media reference that might motivate you?
- If you had to choose one media reference as being the most motivating as you decide whether or

not to participate, which would it be? Why?

Finally, we want to share with you examples of how policymakers have used the ECLS findings to inform and develop education policy. Please note we've also included an example from another study conducted by NCES.

[SHOW STATEMENTS ABOUT POLICY USES] (see Attachment 6)

- What are your general reactions?
- Are these policies helpful or informative for you and your teachers as you're working with students and parents? Why or why not?
- What are your reactions to the relevancy of these older policy examples? Are they still helpful or informative?
- Do the studies seem more valuable to you knowing that their results are used to inform education policy? Does that motivate you to allow your school, teachers, and students to participate in the study? Why or why not?
  - If not, is there another type of policy that might motivate you?
- If you had to choose one policy as being the most motivating as you decide whether or not to participate, which would it be? Why?

Before we move on, I'd like you to think about all of the examples I've shared with you (i.e., the ECLS results, examples of how the data are used in research, reported by the media, and used by policymakers).

- Of all the examples we have reviewed, what would motivate you the most to allow your staff and students to participate? Why?
- Of all the examples we have reviewed, what would be the least motivating for you to allow your staff and students to participate? Why?
- Of all the examples we have reviewed, is there anything that discourages you from allowing your staff and students to participate? Why?
- Which information do you find more compelling as you consider allowing your staff and students to participate, results from previous rounds of the study or information about how the results have been used?

## **RECRUITMENT MATERIALS FOR THE ECLS (25 MINUTES)**

Now let's imagine your school has been selected to participate in the study. We have a few draft materials we'd like you to look over. These are examples of some of the materials you would receive if you were asked to participate. Keeping in mind the information we've shared about the study already, we would like your feedback on whether the materials are clear, if they provide enough information about the study, and how we can improve them to better motivate school administrators and principals to participate in the study

We're going to look at a notification letter and a fact sheet together, as those are key components of the initial notification package for school administrators. You would receive these materials in a folder in the mail, in an envelope that includes the U.S. Department of Education logo.

[SHOW OR PROVIDE THE ECLS NOTIFICATION LETTER AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FACT SHEET, AND GIVE ADMINISTRATORS FIVE MINUTES TO REVIEW] (see Attachments 7 and 22)

- What are your general reactions?
- Do the materials tell you what you need to know about the study?

- Is there too much detail?
- What additional questions do you have about the study?
  - Would you expect those answers in the initial notification materials or in follow-up communications?
- What more is needed in the materials to make it clear to you what you, your staff, and your students would be expected to do if you are asked to participate in the study?
- After reading these materials, would you be likely to allow your staff and students to participate in the study?
  - If yes, are there specific phrases or sections that are particularly motivating?
  - If no, how can they be more motivating? Would you want to see more of the examples we discussed earlier in these materials? Are there specific sections that discourage you from participating?
- What are your reactions to the size of the study (i.e., approximately 20,000 students)? Does it give the study credibility? Or would you consider it easier to opt out of the study because of the size?
- What are your thoughts on the design of the materials? Are they appealing?
- Is there any other feedback you have on the materials?
- [If time allows] If the recruitment materials included testimonials from school administrators and/or teachers who have previously participated in the ECLS and have had positive experiences, would this make you more likely to agree to participate?

## **CONCLUSION (5 MINUTES)**

Now I'd like for you to consider whether or not you would be motivated to participate in the study based on what you've learned tonight. I'd like for each of you to answer the following questions:

- Knowing what you do about the study, based on what I described in the beginning and what you've read, would you likely allow your staff and students to participate in the study?
  - If your answer is yes, what have you been most motivated by?
  - If your answer is no, what would need to change in order for you to allow your staff and students to participate?

## The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023) Elementary School Administrators Focus Group ECLS Value Statements

### DATA FINDINGS

- Reduction in staffing and a shortage of teachers is on the rise. A higher percentage of schools in 2010-11 than schools in 1998-99 reported reduction in staffing and a shortage of teachers within their schools.
- Schools continue to build on best practices, smoothing the way for their entering kindergartners. A higher percentage of schools in 2010-11 than schools in 1998-99 reached out to families to provide information on how to prepare their child for kindergarten and topics that are part of the kindergarten program.
- In the 1998-99 school year, kindergarten students whose teachers placed a greater emphasis on student-centered instruction showed higher gains in mathematics than those whose teachers placed less emphasis on such practices.<sup>1</sup>
- On average, third graders indicated that they only occasionally exhibited externalizing (e.g., fighting and arguing) or internalizing (e.g., anxiety, sadness, loneliness) behaviors.
  - Boys indicated a higher likelihood of exhibiting externalizing behaviors than girls.
  - Black third graders reported more of both types of problem behaviors than White, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander third graders.<sup>2</sup>
- Among second graders whose parents reported low involvement in school activities, 46% had parents who reported inconvenient meeting times as a barrier.
  - Higher percentages for this barrier were reported for Black students (62%), while lower percentages were reported for White students (37%).<sup>3</sup>

### SECONDARY RESEARCH

- ECLS data are often cited by researchers working to inform education policy and practice for our nation's students. Using our NCES Bibliography tool, you can find journal articles, conference papers, and more that cite the study. Topics include:
  - Meeting the needs of English Language Learners through professional development
  - The use of individual digital devices in first grade classrooms and the development of early literacy
  - Large group, small group, and individual activities in full-day kindergarten classrooms and children's early learning
  - Instructional practices that most help first-grade students with and without mathematics difficulties
  - The effects of grouping students on achievement
  - The efficacy of preschool participation on kindergarten readiness

### MEDIA REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Teacher Qualifications, Instructional Practices, and Reading and Mathematics Gains of Kindergartners (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/2006031.pdf>)

<sup>2</sup> Kindergarten Through Third Grade: Children's Beginning School Experiences ([https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/beg\\_school/](https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/beg_school/))

<sup>3</sup> Barriers to Parent-School Involvement for Early Elementary Students (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017165/index.asp>)





- o [Is Summer Learning Loss Real? – Education Next](#)
- o [When Does the Racial Achievement Gap First Appear? – The Atlantic](#)
- o [Gender Gap in Math Starts in Kindergarten, Study Says – PBS Newshour](#)
- o [Kids in Poor Schools Show Same Academic Growth as Others, Ohio State Study Finds – The Columbus Dispatch](#)
- o [More Testing, Less Play: Study Finds Higher Expectations for Kindergartners – NPR](#)
- o [Report Suggests Little Benefit to Delaying Kindergarten – The Chicago Tribune](#)

## POLICY IMPACT

- “The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study provides valuable information to policymakers as they work to improve education. In Minnesota, for example, we used the study’s findings in 2013 to help pass a bill that fully funds all-day kindergarten for students across the state.”  
~ Former Policy Advisor, Minnesota Senate
- Policymakers rely on studies such as the ECLS as they decide what programs and policies should be implemented. Results from the ECLS have been cited in Congressional reports to support policies such as:
  - o the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009, which bolstered the federal Pell Grant program and increased funding in other higher education and K12 programs; and
  - o the Education Begins at Home Act of 2008, which was intended to expand early childhood programs that increase school readiness and identify early development and health concerns.
- *An example from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), another study conducted by NCES:* In 2005, results from the NAEP reading assessment revealed that eighth-grade students in North Carolina scored below the national average. In response, the state deployed more than 200 literacy coaches to middle schools around the state to help teachers reach students with reading difficulties before they made the transition to high school.
- *An example from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002), another study conducted by NCES:* The California Dropout Research Project conducted research using the ELS:2002 data to examine predictors of high school graduation in the state. Recommendations from this research were incorporated into six California State Senate bills to address the state’s dropout problem.

## Elementary School Administrators Focus Group ECLS Letter

Date  
Addressee's Name  
School  
Address  
Address 2  
City, State, ZIP

Dear <School Administrator>:

Your school has been chosen by the U.S. Department of Education to participate in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023). This study will provide valuable information for parents, educators, researchers, and policymakers about children's development and learning throughout elementary school.

I encourage you to participate in the ECLS-K:2023. This study is voluntary, but your school's input is extremely important to ensuring that all kinds of students, schools and families are represented. Please know that your district office is aware of the ECLS-K:2023 and that you are being asked to participate.

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

Someone from Westat—our research partner for the ECLS-K:2023—will contact you about the study within the next few days. If you have any questions, please call 1-888-204-4864 or send an email to [ECLSHelp@westat.com](mailto:ECLSHelp@westat.com). You can also learn more at <https://nces.ed.gov/ecls/>.

Thank you for our support of this important study!

Sincerely,

James Lynn Woodworth  
Commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences  
U.S. Department of Education

*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 identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151).*

# Kindergarten Teachers

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

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 U.S. Department of Education. May I please speak with <potential participant’s name>?

We are recruiting kindergarten teachers for a paid online focus group about how they view their participation in education studies. We are not selling anything. We are simply interested in hearing from you about the factors that you consider when deciding whether or not to participate in an education study.

1. Are you a current kindergarten teacher?

[DO NOT ACCEPT SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS, STUDENT TEACHERS, TEACHER AIDES, OR OTHER NON-TEACHING SCHOOL STAFF – MUST TEACH AT LEAST ONE REGULAR KINDERGARTEN CLASS AT LEAST HALF TIME]

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
[THANK AND END] No \_\_\_\_\_

2. How many people live the city or town where your school is located? [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST ONE SCHOOL IN A COMMUNITY OF 50,000 OR LESS PER GROUP]

More than 250,000 people \_\_\_\_\_  
50,000 to 250,000 people \_\_\_\_\_  
Less than 50,000 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Is the school where you teach kindergarten a private or public school? [Indicate which type] [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST TWO PRIVATE SCHOOLS PER GROUP]

Public \_\_\_\_\_  
Private \_\_\_\_\_

4. What grade levels does your school include? [RECRUIT A MIX]

Pre-K/Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Pre-K/Kindergarten through 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Pre-K/Kindergarten through 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. How many students attend your school? [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST ONE SCHOOL SERVING MORE THAN 500 STUDENTS]

More than 500 students \_\_\_\_\_  
250-500 students \_\_\_\_\_  
Less than 250 students \_\_\_\_\_

6. Please indicate your age range.

Under age 20 \_\_\_\_\_  
20-29 \_\_\_\_\_  
30-39 \_\_\_\_\_

40-49 \_\_\_\_\_  
50-59 \_\_\_\_\_  
60-69 \_\_\_\_\_  
70 or over \_\_\_\_\_

7. 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 \_\_\_\_\_

8. 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 kindergarten teachers to discuss teachers’ participation in education studies. During the meeting, we will describe a study and discuss your perceptions of it. We also want to learn how the study can improve communication materials for kindergarten teachers.

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 U.S. Department of Education. We are recruiting kindergarten teachers for an online focus group about how teachers decide whether or not to

participate in education studies. 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 a \$100 Amazon gift card 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, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Kindergarten Teachers Focus Group Recruitment Screener, In-person**

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 U.S. Department of Education. May I please speak with <potential participant's name>?

We are recruiting kindergarten teachers for a paid in-person focus group about how they view their participation in education studies. We are not selling anything. We are simply interested in hearing from you about the factors that you consider when deciding whether or not to participate in an education study.

1. Are you a current kindergarten teacher?

[DO NOT ACCEPT SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS, STUDENT TEACHERS, TEACHER AIDES, OR OTHER NON-TEACHING SCHOOL STAFF – MUST TEACH AT LEAST ONE REGULAR KINDERGARTEN CLASS AT LEAST HALF TIME]

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
[THANK AND END] No \_\_\_\_\_

2. How many people live the city or town where your school is located? [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST ONE SCHOOL IN A COMMUNITY OF 50,000 OR LESS PER GROUP]

More than 250,000 people \_\_\_\_\_  
50,000 to 250,000 people \_\_\_\_\_  
Less than 50,000 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Is the school where you teach kindergarten a private or public school? [Indicate which type] [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST TWO PRIVATE SCHOOLS PER GROUP]

Public \_\_\_\_\_  
Private \_\_\_\_\_

4. What grade levels does your school include? [RECRUIT A MIX]

Pre-K/Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Pre-K/Kindergarten through 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Pre-K/Kindergarten through 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. How many students attend your school? [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST ONE SCHOOL SERVING MORE THAN 500 STUDENTS]

More than 500 students \_\_\_\_\_  
250-500 students \_\_\_\_\_  
Less than 250 students \_\_\_\_\_

6. Please indicate your age range.

Under age 20 \_\_\_\_\_  
20-29 \_\_\_\_\_  
30-39 \_\_\_\_\_

40-49 \_\_\_\_\_  
50-59 \_\_\_\_\_  
60-69 \_\_\_\_\_  
70 or over \_\_\_\_\_

7. 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 \_\_\_\_\_

8. 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 would like to meet at [FACILITY ADDRESS] at <<TIME>> on <<DATE>> with other kindergarten teachers to discuss teachers’ participation in education studies. During the meeting, we will describe a study and discuss your perceptions of it. We also want to learn how the study can improve communication materials for kindergarten teachers.

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 meet at [FACILITY ADDRESS] at <<TIME>> on <<DATE>>.

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 U.S. Department of Education. We are recruiting kindergarten teachers for an in-person focus group about how teachers decide whether or not to participate in education studies. 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 a \$100 Amazon gift card 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, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Kindergarten Teachers Focus Group Consent Form, Online**

**CONSENT FORM**

**PARTICIPATION IN A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an in-person focus group of kindergarten teachers. 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 kindergarten teachers about participation in education studies. The information obtained from this group will guide recruitment strategies for an upcoming early education study to improve participation rates 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 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 [NUMBER].

**CONSENT**

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

---

SIGNATURE

**The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Kindergarten Teachers Focus Group Consent Form, In-person**

**CONSENT FORM**

**PARTICIPATION IN A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an in-person focus group of kindergarten teachers.

**FOCUS GROUP PURPOSE**

A focus group will be held with kindergarten teachers about participation in education studies. The information obtained from this group will guide recruitment strategies for an upcoming early education study to improve participation rates across the United States.

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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 [NUMBER].

**CONSENT**

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

---

SIGNATURE

## **The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023) Kindergarten Teachers Focus Group Protocol (Moderator's Guide)**

### **Research Questions:**

- What messages and statements motivate kindergarten teachers to participate in the study? Are there messages and statements that would discourage teachers from participating in the study?
  - Are the study's data findings relevant and motivating?
  - Are the examples of how the study has been used by policymakers, researchers, and the media relevant and motivating?
  - Why are these messages or statements motivating or not motivating?
- What are teachers' reactions to the notification package messages and materials?
  - What are teachers' reactions to the initial notification letter and fact sheets?
  - Are the materials clear, relevant, and motivating?
  - Are the materials helpful or informative for teachers as they are working with students?
  - What modifications could be made to improve the materials?
  - What information should be included in the initial notification materials?
  - Would teachers prefer to learn more about the study online or in additional materials provided by their school (i.e., email or print)?
- Would a video that demonstrates the study experience for students—such as one produced for the International Early Learning Study—be helpful for teachers as they consider participating in the study?
- What factors do teachers give as reasons for why they would participate in the study?
- What factors do teachers give as reasons for why they would not participate in the study?

### **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 kindergarten teachers. A focus group provides the opportunity 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/or video] recording the session, so I have the most accurate notes possible 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?

Sample letters and handouts 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 keep the discussion moving along. 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 say your name (first name only is okay) and anything else you'd like to tell us about yourself. Please also confirm verbally that you consent to participate in the focus group.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE ECLS (5 MINUTES)**

Today we'll be focusing on a study program conducted by the U.S. Department of Education called the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study or the 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 includes a set of four voluntary studies that examine child development, school readiness, and early school experiences over time. The ECLS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics within the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences.

- The ECLS kindergarten studies include nationally representative samples of kindergartners and also collect information from students' parents, teachers, and principals. Because the studies are longitudinal, they follow the same group of students over several years.
- ECLS program studies have been conducted four times since the 1990s.
- The next ECLS will focus on students who are in kindergarten in 2022. It will collect information about students twice in kindergarten, and once a year in first grade, third grade, and fifth grade. Information will also be collected about a sample of students in prekindergarten via online surveys.
  - Approximately 20,000 students, from about 1,000 schools across the country, will be asked to participate. In each school, approximately 24 kindergarten students will be randomly selected to participate.
  - Starting in kindergarten, students will participate in 45-minute, one-on-one sessions with trained ECLS staff to measure their math and reading skills. The sessions will happen in schools over 1-3 days in each phase of the study.
  - Parents, teachers, and principals will be asked to complete online surveys to answer questions about children's skills, experiences, and/or learning environments. For example, the surveys include questions about children's math, reading, and social skills; what classroom activities and resources are available to students; and how schools engage parents.
- Participating schools, teachers, and families receive a monetary incentive each time they complete a round of the study.

## **STATEMENTS ABOUT THE VALUE OF THE ECLS (25 MINUTES)**

We've conducted focus groups with principals and parents about the ECLS to get their feedback on materials they might receive as a potential participant but have not yet spoken to kindergarten teachers. The most common piece of feedback we've received is that as potential ECLS participants, they would like more information about the types of results that are available and how those findings have been or can be used to improve education for students. We've compiled several different examples of information, and we'd like your feedback on which of these is most meaningful to you as a teacher and would most likely motivate you to participate in the study. Our goal is to determine which examples are most motivating so that we can create additional materials focused on that information for potential participants.

The first set of examples we want to share with you are findings from the ECLS reports produced by the U.S. Department of Education.

[SHOW PAGE OF DATA FINDINGS] (see Attachment 13)

- What are your general reactions?
- Are these findings helpful or informative for you as a kindergarten teacher as you're working with students? Why or why not?
- What are your reactions to the fact that these are older results? Is the information still helpful?
- Does the ECLS seem more valuable to you knowing these types of results will be provided to you? Do these findings motivate you to participate in the study? Why or why not?
  - If not, is there another type of finding that might motivate you?

Next, we want to share with you examples of how the ECLS data have been used by policymakers and researchers and how they have been shared by the media.

[SHOW PAGE OF STATEMENTS ABOUT HOW THE ECLS DATA HAVE BEEN USED] (see Attachment 13)

- What are your general reactions?
- Are these policies, studies, and articles helpful or informative for you as a kindergarten teacher as you're working with students? Why or why not?
- Does the ECLS seem more valuable to you knowing that the findings have been used in these ways? Does that motivate you to participate in the study? Why or why not?
  - If not, is there another type of policy or research that might motivate you?

Now I'd like you to think about these examples as well as the data findings we reviewed earlier.

- Of all the examples we have reviewed, what would motivate you the most to participate in the study? Why?
- Of all the examples we have reviewed, what would be the least motivating for you as you decide whether or not you will participate?
- Of all the examples we have reviewed, is there anything that discourages you from participating? Why?
- Which information do you find more compelling as you consider participating, results from previous rounds of the study or information about the results have been used?

## **RECRUITMENT MATERIALS FOR THE ECLS (45 MINUTES)**

Now let's imagine you and some of your students have been selected to participate in the ECLS. We have a few draft materials we'd like you to look over. Keeping in mind the information we've shared about the study already, we would like your feedback on whether the materials are clear, if they provide enough information about the study, and how we can improve them to better motivate kindergarten teachers to participate in the study.

We're going to look at a notification letter and a fact sheet together, as those are often the first two pieces of information that are shared with potential participants. You would receive these materials from your principal or another person in your school's leadership, ideally in the same way you usually receive information (i.e., by email, handouts, etc.). (25 minutes)

[PROVIDE THE ECLS LETTER AND TEACHERS' STUDY OVERVIEW FACT SHEET, AND GIVE TEACHERS FIVE MINUTES TO REVIEW] (see Attachments 14, 23, and 24)

- What are your general reactions?
- Do the materials tell you what you need to know about the study?
  - Is there too much detail?
  - What additional questions do you have about the study?
  - If you wanted to learn more about the study, would you prefer to go online to read more about the study or be provided with additional information from your school (i.e., email or print)?
- Do the materials make it clear to you what you and your students would be expected to do if participating in the study?
- After reading these materials, would you be likely to participate in the study?
  - If yes, are there specific phrases or sections that are particularly motivating?
  - If no, how can they be more motivating? Would you want to see more of the examples we discussed earlier in these materials? Are there specific sections that discourage you from participating?
- What are your thoughts on the design of the materials? Are they appealing?
- Is there any other feedback you have on the materials?

Now I'd like to briefly show you a different fact sheet. This fact sheet includes all of the same content that was in the fact sheet we just reviewed, but the information is presented in slightly different ways. (5 minutes)

[PROVIDE THE ALTERNATIVE STUDY OVERVIEW FACT SHEET, AND GIVE TEACHERS A MOMENT TO REVIEW] (see Attachment 24)

- On this second fact sheet, the logo for the U.S. Department of Education is presented on the front of the fact sheet.
  - Is the logo recognizable to you? Does it give the study more credibility to have it on the front of the fact sheet instead of the back?
- On the back of this fact sheet, the sample results from the study are presented differently. Do you have any preferences for this design compared to the design on the first fact sheet we reviewed?

Now we'd like to show you a video. One of the points we've heard from school administrators is that they would like to hear testimonials from their peers about the value of the study or what it was like to participate. This is an example of a video that was developed for a different and new kindergarten study. It shares perspectives from real parents, teachers, and school staff about the value of the study. We'd like your feedback on whether or not you would like to see a similar video for the ECLS. (15 minutes)

[SHOW THE VALUE OF IELS VIDEO: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6Vyd-qzV8g>]

- What are your general reactions?
- Does the video give you a better understanding of why the International Early Learning Study would be valuable to teachers, school administrators, and parents?
- Would you find a video like this to be motivating as you consider participating in the ECLS?
- If your school provided a link to this video in the information about the study, how likely would you be to watch it? Is there anything that would make you more likely to watch it?

## **CONCLUSION (5 MINUTES)**

Now I'd like for you to consider whether or not you would participate in the ECLS based on what you've learned tonight. I'd like for each of you to answer the following questions:

- Knowing what you do about the study, based on what I described in the beginning and what you've read, would you likely participate in the study?
  - If your answer is yes, what have you been most motivated by?
  - If your answer is no, what would need to change in order for you to participate?
- Regardless of whether you would participate, would you recommend to your students' parents that they allow their children to participate in the ECLS? Why or why not?
- Do you have any additional comments about communications about the study or the ECLS in general? Thank you.



## **The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023) Kindergarten Teachers Focus Group ECLS Value Statements**

### **DATA FINDINGS**

- Schools continue to build on best practices, smoothing the way for their entering kindergartners. A higher percentage of schools in 2010-11 than schools in 1998-99 reached out to families to provide information on how to prepare their child for kindergarten and topics that are part of the kindergarten program.
- In the 1998-99 school year, kindergarten students whose teachers placed a greater emphasis on student-centered instruction showed higher gains in mathematics than those whose teachers placed less emphasis on such practices.<sup>4</sup>
- On average, third graders indicated that they only occasionally exhibited problem behaviors, by externalizing (e.g., fighting and arguing) or internalizing (e.g., anxiety, sadness, loneliness).
  - Boys indicated a higher likelihood of exhibiting externalizing behaviors than girls.
  - Black third graders reported more of both types of problem behaviors than White, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander third graders.<sup>5</sup>
- Among second graders whose parents reported low involvement in school activities, 46% had parents who reported inconvenient meeting times as a barrier.
  - Higher percentages for this barrier were reported for Black students (62%), while lower percentages were reported for White students (37%).<sup>6</sup>

### **HOW THE ECLS DATA ARE USED**

- “The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study provides valuable information to policymakers as they work to improve education. In Minnesota, for example, we used the study’s findings in 2013 to help pass a bill that fully funds all-day kindergarten for students across the state.”  
~ Former Policy Advisor, Minnesota Senate
- ECLS data are often cited by researchers working to inform education policy and practice for our nation’s students. Using our NCES Bibliography tool, you can find journal articles, conference papers, and more that cite the study. Topics include:
  - Meeting the needs of English Language Learners through professional development
  - The use of individual digital devices in first grade classrooms and the development of early literacy
  - Large group, small group, and individual activities in full-day kindergarten classrooms and children’s early learning
- The ECLS results are frequently referred to in national, education-, and health-focused news. Recent headlines include:

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<sup>4</sup> Teacher Qualifications, Instructional Practices, and Reading and Mathematics Gains of Kindergartners (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/2006031.pdf>)

<sup>5</sup> Kindergarten Through Third Grade: Children’s Beginning School Experiences ([https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/beg\\_school/](https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/beg_school/))

<sup>6</sup> Barriers to Parent-School Involvement for Early Elementary Students (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017165/index.asp>)

- o Is Summer Learning Loss Real? – *Education Next*
- o More Testing, Less Play: Study Finds Higher Expectations for Kindergartners – *NPR*
- o When Does the Racial Achievement Gap First Appear? – *The Atlantic*
- o Gender Gap in Math Starts in Kindergarten, Study Says – *PBS Newshour*
- o Report Suggests Little Benefit to Delaying Kindergarten – *The Chicago Tribune*

**The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Kindergarten Teachers Focus Group ECLS Letter**

School Letterhead

Date

Dear Teacher:

Our school has been chosen by the U.S. Department of Education to participate in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS), Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023). The study will provide valuable information for educators, parents, and policymakers about children's development and learning throughout elementary school.

You and some of your kindergarten students have been selected to participate in the ECLS. You can find answers to frequently asked questions about participation on the back of this letter. The additional fact sheet I have provided includes more information about the ECLS program and results from previous years.

I encourage you to participate in the ECLS. The study is voluntary, but participation is critically important for the study to be successful. Without hearing from teachers like you, the study cannot provide a complete picture of children's knowledge and skills. Not only will our school receive \$300 for participating, but you also will receive a monetary incentive of \$15 for a survey about you and your class, plus \$10 for each survey you complete about a participating student!

Please log on to the website below and complete your surveys by <date>.

- Website: [myecls.ed.gov](https://myecls.ed.gov)
- Username: <TeacherID>
- Initial password: <Password>

The U.S. Department of Education is working with Westat, a research organization, to conduct the study. If you have any questions, please call 1-888-204-4864 or send an email to [ECLSHelp@westat.com](mailto:ECLSHelp@westat.com). You can also learn more about the study and see examples of questions from previous ECLS studies at <https://nces.ed.gov/ecls/myECLSK2023>.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this important study!

Sincerely,

<School Principal>

## **Participation Information for the ECLS-K:2023**

What will my students be asked to do?

- Your students will complete a variety of activities, such as answering math and literacy-related questions, during a one-on-one session with a trained ECLS team member. The team member will read and show illustrated tasks to the children, who can respond verbally or by pointing to the answer of their choice. Children can skip any question they do not want to answer.
- The session will take place at school and last about 45-60 minutes. Our school will work with the ECLS team to make sure students do not miss important school activities to participate in the study.

What will I be asked to do as a teacher?

- You will be asked to complete brief online surveys to answer questions about yourself, your classroom, and the skills and knowledge of your participating students.
- Teachers receive \$15 for the survey about themselves and their classrooms, and \$10 for each survey they complete about a participating student.

What is involved for parents and guardians?

- The ECLS will ask parents or guardians of participating students to complete a 30- to 45-minute survey in each phase of the study. The survey can be completed online or by telephone, whichever parents prefer. Parents and guardians will be asked questions about their family, their child's experiences in school, and more to gain a better understanding of their child's learning and development.
- Parents or guardians will receive \$15 when they complete each survey.

How often will the study activities be conducted?

- The ECLS team will conduct study activities in several phases, including twice a year when children are in kindergarten and once a year when children are in first, third, and fifth grade.
- Schools receive \$300 for participating.

How were our students and school selected to participate in the ECLS?

- The U.S. Department of Education identified a sample of about 1,000 public and private schools to represent the nation in the study. Students were randomly chosen within those schools to ensure they reflect the regional, socioeconomic, and racial/ethnic diversity of the nation's students.

What results will be reported?

- The ECLS will share results about the nation's students overall. The study will not report results for individual children.

Will the names of participants and their responses be confidential?

- All of the information provided by children, parents, teachers, and principals 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).

*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 identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151).*

## Parents

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

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 U.S. Department of Education. May I please speak with <potential participant’s name>?

We are recruiting kindergarten parents for a paid online focus group about how they view their families’ participation in education studies. We are not selling anything. We are simply interested in hearing from you about the factors that parents consider when deciding whether or not to participate or permit their children to participate in an education study.

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) \_\_\_\_\_
  - The U.S. Department of Education \_\_\_\_\_

[IF YES TO ANY >> THANK AND END]

2. Are you the parent or legal guardian of at least one child in kindergarten?
- Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
[THANK AND END] No \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many people live the city or town where your school is located? [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST ONE SCHOOL IN A COMMUNITY OF 50,000 OR LESS PER GROUP]
- More than 250,000 people \_\_\_\_\_  
50,000 to 250,000 people \_\_\_\_\_  
Less than 50,000 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Please indicate your age range.
- Under age 20 \_\_\_\_\_  
20-29 \_\_\_\_\_  
30-39 \_\_\_\_\_  
40-49 \_\_\_\_\_  
50-59 \_\_\_\_\_  
60-69 \_\_\_\_\_  
70 or over \_\_\_\_\_

5. 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 \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which of the following categories best describes your annual household income? [RECRUIT AT LEAST 2-3 PER GROUP WITH INCOME OF \$40K OR LESS]

Less than \$20,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
\$20,000-\$39,999 \_\_\_\_\_  
\$40,000-\$59,999 \_\_\_\_\_  
\$60,000-\$79,999 \_\_\_\_\_  
\$80,000-\$99,999 \_\_\_\_\_  
\$100,000 or more \_\_\_\_\_

7. 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 at <<TIME>> on <<DATE>> with other parents to discuss participation in education studies. During the meeting, we will describe a study and discuss your perceptions of it. We also want to learn how the study can improve communication materials for kindergarten parents 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 U.S. Department of Education. We are recruiting participants for an online focus group about how parents decide whether or not they and their children will participate in education studies. 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 a \$100 Amazon gift card 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, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Parents Focus Group Recruitment Screener, In-person**

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 U.S. Department of Education. May I please speak with <potential participant’s name>?

We are recruiting kindergarten parents for a paid in-person focus group about how they view their families’ participation in education studies. We are not selling anything. We are simply interested in hearing from you about the factors that parents consider when deciding whether or not to participate or permit their children to participate in an education study.

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) \_\_\_\_\_
  - The U.S. Department of Education \_\_\_\_\_

[IF YES TO ANY >> THANK AND END]

2. Are you the parent or legal guardian of at least one child in kindergarten?
- Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
[THANK AND END] No \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many people live the city or town where your school is located? [RECRUIT A MIX, WITH AT LEAST ONE SCHOOL IN A COMMUNITY OF 50,000 OR LESS PER GROUP]
- More than 250,000 people \_\_\_\_\_  
50,000 to 250,000 people \_\_\_\_\_  
Less than 50,000 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Please indicate your age range.
- Under age 20 \_\_\_\_\_  
20-29 \_\_\_\_\_  
30-39 \_\_\_\_\_  
40-49 \_\_\_\_\_  
50-59 \_\_\_\_\_  
60-69 \_\_\_\_\_  
70 or over \_\_\_\_\_

5. 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 \_\_\_\_

6. Which of the following categories best describes your annual household income? [RECRUIT AT LEAST 2-3 PER GROUP WITH INCOME OF \$40K OR LESS]

Less than \$20,000 \_\_\_\_  
\$20,000-\$39,999 \_\_\_\_  
\$40,000-\$59,999 \_\_\_\_  
\$60,000-\$79,999 \_\_\_\_  
\$80,000-\$99,999 \_\_\_\_  
\$100,000 or more \_\_\_\_

7. 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 would like to meet at [FACILITY ADDRESS] at <<TIME>> on <<DATE>> with other parents to discuss participation in education studies. During the meeting, we will describe a study and discuss your perceptions of it. We also want to learn how the study can improve communication materials for kindergarten parents 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 meet at [FACILITY ADDRESS] at <<TIME>> on <<DATE>>.

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 U.S. Department of Education. We are recruiting participants for an in-person focus group about how parents decide whether or not they and their children will participate in education studies. 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 a \$100 Amazon gift card 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, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Parents Focus Group Consent Form, Online**

## CONSENT FORM

### PARTICIPATION IN A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an online focus group of parents of kindergarten students. 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 parents of kindergarten students about participation in education studies. The information obtained from this group will guide recruitment strategies for an upcoming early childhood education study to improve participation rates 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 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].

#### CONSENT

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

---

SIGNATURE

## CONSENT FORM

### PARTICIPATION IN A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an in-person focus group of parents of kindergarten children.

#### **FOCUS GROUP PURPOSE**

A focus group will be held with parents about participation in education studies. The information obtained from this group will guide recruitment strategies for an upcoming early childhood education study to improve participation rates 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].

#### **CONSENT**

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

---

SIGNATURE

## **The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023) Parents Focus Group Protocol (Moderator's Guide)**

### **Research Questions:**

- What messages and statements motivate parents of kindergarten children to participate in the study and allow their child to participate in the study as well? Are there messages and statements that would discourage parents from participating and allowing their children to participate?
  - Are the study's data findings relevant and motivating?
  - Are the examples of how the study has been used by policymakers, researchers, and the media relevant and motivating?
  - Why are these messages or statements motivating or not motivating?
- What are parents' reactions to the notification package messages and materials?
  - What are parents' reactions to the initial notification letter and fact sheets?
  - Are the materials clear, relevant, and motivating?
  - Are the materials helpful or informative for parents?
  - What modifications could be made to improve the materials?
  - What information should be included in the initial notification materials?
  - Would parents prefer to read more about the study in print materials or on a website?
- Would a video that demonstrates the study experience for students—such as one produced for the International Early Learning Study—be helpful for parents as they consider participating in and allowing their child to participate in the study?
- What factors do parents give as reasons for why they would participate in the study and allow their child to participate?
- What factors do parents give as reasons for why they would not participate in the study or allow their child to participate?

### **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 parents of kindergarten children. A focus group provides us the opportunity 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 others. 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/or video] recording the session so I have accurate 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?

Sample letters and handouts 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 keep the discussion moving along. 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 say your name (first name only is okay) and anything else you'd like to tell us about yourself. Please also confirm verbally that you consent to participate in the focus group.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE ECLS (5 MINUTES)**

Today we'll be focusing on a study program conducted by the U.S. Department of Education called the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study or the 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 includes a set of four voluntary studies that examine child development, school readiness, and early school experiences over time. The ECLS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics within the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences.

- The ECLS kindergarten studies include nationally representative samples of kindergartners and also collect information from students' parents, teachers, and principals. Because the studies are longitudinal, they follow the same group of students over several years.
- ECLS program studies have been conducted four times since the 1990s.
- The next ECLS will focus on students who are in kindergarten in 2022. It will collect information about students twice in kindergarten, and once a year in first grade, third grade, and fifth grade. Information will also be collected about a sample of students in prekindergarten via online surveys.
  - Approximately 20,000 students, from about 1,000 schools across the country, will be asked to participate. In each school, approximately 24 kindergarten students will be randomly selected to participate.
  - Starting in kindergarten, students will participate in 45-minute, one-on-one sessions with trained ECLS staff to measure their math and reading skills. The sessions will happen in schools over 1-3 days in each phase of the study.
  - Parents, teachers, and principals will be asked to complete online surveys to answer questions about children's skills, experiences, and/or learning environments. For example, the surveys include questions about children's math, reading, and social skills; what classroom activities and resources are available to students; and how schools engage parents.
- Participating schools, teachers, and families receive a monetary incentive each time they complete a round of the study.

## **STATEMENTS ABOUT THE VALUE OF THE ECLS (25 MINUTES)**

We've conducted focus groups with principals and parents about the ECLS to get their feedback on materials they might receive as a potential participant. The most common piece of feedback we've received is that, as potential ECLS participants, they would like more information about the types of results that are available and how those findings have been or can be used to improve education for students. We've compiled several different examples of information, and we'd like your feedback on which of the examples is most meaningful to you as a parent of a kindergartner and would most likely motivate you to participate and allow your child to participate in the study. Our goal is to determine which examples are most motivating so that we can create additional materials focused on that information for potential participants.

The first set of examples we want to share with you are findings from the ECLS reports produced by the U.S. Department of Education.

[SHOW PAGE OF DATA FINDINGS] (see Attachment 20)

- What are your general reactions?
- Are these findings helpful or informative for you as a parent of a kindergartner? Why or why not?
- What are your reactions to the fact that these are older results? Is the information still helpful?
- Does the ECLS seem more valuable to you knowing these types of results will be provided to you?
- Do these findings motivate you to participate in the study? Why or why not?
  - If not, is there another type of finding that might motivate you?
- Do these findings motivate you to allow your child to participate? Why or why not?
  - If not, is there another type of finding that might motivate you?

Next, we want to share with you examples of how the ECLS data have been used by policymakers and researchers and how they have been shared by the media.

[SHOW PAGE OF STATEMENTS ABOUT HOW THE ECLS DATA HAVE BEEN USED] (see Attachment 20)

- What are your general reactions?
- Are these policies, studies, and articles helpful or informative for you as a parent of a kindergartner? Why or why not?
- Does the ECLS seem more valuable to you knowing that the findings have been used in these ways?
- Does that motivate you to participate in the study? Why or why not?
  - If not, is there another type of policy or research that might motivate you?
- Does that motivate you to allow your child to participate in the study? Why or why not?
  - If not, is there another type of policy or research that might motivate you?

Now I'd like you to think about these examples as well as the data findings we reviewed earlier.

- Of all the examples we have reviewed, what would motivate you the most to participate in the study and allow your child to participate? Why?
- Of all the examples we have reviewed, what would be the least motivating for you as you decide whether or not you will participate and allow your child to participate?
- Of all the examples we have reviewed, is there anything that discourages you from participating or allowing your child to participate? Why?
- Which information do you find more compelling as you consider participating, results from previous rounds of the study or information about the results have been used?

## **RECRUITMENT MATERIALS FOR THE ECLS (45 MINUTES)**

Now let's imagine you and your child have been selected to participate in the study. We have a few draft materials we'd like you to look over. Keeping in mind the information we've shared about the study already, we would like your feedback on whether the materials are clear, if they provide enough information about the study, and how we can improve them to better motivate parents of kindergarten children to participate in the study.

We're going to look at a notification letter and a fact sheet together, as those are the often the first two pieces of information that are shared with potential participants. You would receive these materials from your child's

school, ideally in the same way your school usually sends information to you (i.e., in your child's backpack, by email, etc.). (25 minutes)

[PROVIDE THE ECLS LETTER AND PARENTS' STUDY OVERVIEW FACT SHEET, AND GIVE PARENTS FIVE MINUTES TO REVIEW] (see Attachments 21, 25, and 26)

- What are your general reactions?
- Do the materials tell you what you need to know about the study?
  - Is there too much detail?
  - What additional questions do you have about the study?
  - Would you prefer to read more about the study in print materials or on a website?
- Do the materials make it clear to you what you and your students would be expected to do if you are asked to participate in the study?
- After reading these materials, would you be likely to participate and allow your child to participate in the study?
  - If yes, are there specific phrases or sections that are particularly motivating?
  - If no, how can they be more motivating? Would you want to see more of the examples we discussed earlier in these materials? Are there specific sections that discourage you from participating?
- What are your thoughts on the design of the materials? Are they appealing?
- Is there any other feedback you have on the materials?

Now I'd like to briefly show you a different fact sheet. This fact sheet includes all of the same content that was in the fact sheet we just reviewed, but the information is presented in slightly different ways. (5 minutes)

[PROVIDE THE ALTERNATIVE STUDY OVERVIEW FACT SHEET, AND GIVE PARENTS A MOMENT TO REVIEW] (see Attachment 26)

- On this second fact sheet, the logo for the U.S. Department of Education is presented on the front of the fact sheet.
  - Is the logo recognizable to you? Does it give the study more credibility to have it on the front of the fact sheet instead of the back?
- On the back of this fact sheet, the sample results from the study are presented differently. Do you have any preferences for this design compared to the design on the first fact sheet we reviewed?

Now we'd like to show you a video. One of the points we've heard from parents is that they'd like to know more about what the participation experience will look like for their child. This is an example of a video that was developed for another kindergarten study that shows what students experience. We'd like your feedback on whether or not you would like to see a similar video for the ECLS. (15 minutes)

[SHOW THE IELS STUDENT EXPERIENCE VIDEO: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnVV1e6V8Q8>]

- What are your general reactions?
- Does the video give you a better understanding of what the experience was for students participating in that study?
- Would you find a video like this to be informative as you consider allowing your child to participate in the ECLS? Does it affect your decision to participate as a parent?
- If your child's school provided a link to this video in the information they provide about the study, how likely would you be to watch it? Is there anything that would make you more likely to watch it?

**CONCLUSION (5 MINUTES)**



Now I'd like for you to consider whether or not you would be motivated to participate in the study based on what you've learned tonight. I'd like for each of you to answer the following questions:

- Knowing what you do about the study, based on what I described in the beginning and what you've read, would you likely participate in the study? Would you likely allow your child to participate?
  - If your answer is yes, what have you been most motivated by?
  - If your answer is no, what would need to change in order for you to participate and allow your child to participate?
- Do you have any additional comments about communications about the study or the ECLS in general?  
Thank you.

## The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023) Parents Focus Group ECLS Value Statements

### DATA FINDINGS

- Families are moving around more and more. A higher percentage of entering kindergartners in 2010-11 than in 1998-99 had lived four or more places prior to starting kindergarten.
- Getting enough sleep is important! Did you know that about 9 out of 10 kindergartners are in bed by 9pm? By fifth grade, about 7 out of 10 students are in bed by 9pm.
- How often do family members do math activities with children, such as learning numbers, adding, subtracting, or measuring?
  - 12% of kindergartners participated in math activities **every day** in a typical week
  - 30% participated in math activities **3–6 times a week**
  - 51% participated in math activities **once or twice a week**
  - 7% **never** participated in math activities.<sup>7</sup>
- 46% of parents who reported low involvement in their children’s school activities reported inconvenient meeting times as a barrier to school involvement.<sup>8</sup>

### HOW THE ECLS DATA ARE USED

- “The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study provides valuable information to policymakers as they work to improve education. In Minnesota, for example, we used the study’s findings in 2013 to help pass a bill that fully funds all-day kindergarten for students across the state.”  
~ Former Policy Advisor, Minnesota Senate
- ECLS data are often cited by researchers working to inform education policy and practice for our nation’s students. Topics include:
  - The relationship between preschool participation and kindergarten readiness
  - Reading activities at home and the development of vocabulary
  - Screen time exposure (for example, watching TVs or playing with iPads), among preschool children
  - The relationship between fast food consumption and educational test scores
- ECLS results are frequently referred to in national education- and health-focused news. Recent headlines include:
  - [Is Preschool Really Worth It? New Research Says Yes](#) – *Healthline*
  - [Commentary: Yes, Parents Should Help Their Kids with Homework](#) – *The Daily Herald*
  - [What’s a ‘Normal’ Bedtime for a 5-year-old? Researchers Say Earlier is Better.](#) – *The Washington Post*
  - [Paid Family Leave is Finally Getting the Push it Deserves](#) – *Fatherly*

<sup>7</sup> The Summer After Kindergarten: Children’s Experiences by Socioeconomic Characteristics (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018160.pdf>)

<sup>8</sup> Barriers to Parent-School Involvement for Early Elementary Students (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017165/index.asp>)

**The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023)  
Parent Focus Group ECLS Letter**

School Letterhead
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Date

Dear Parent:

Our school has been chosen by the U.S. Department of Education to participate in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS), Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023). This study will provide valuable information for parents, educators, researchers, and policymakers about children's development and learning throughout elementary school.

Your child and family have been selected to participate in the ECLS. You can find answers to frequently asked questions about participation on the back of this letter. The additional fact sheet I have provided includes more information about the ECLS program and results from previous years.

I encourage you and your child to participate in the ECLS. The study is voluntary, but participation is critically important for the study to be successful. Children and their families are asked to join the ECLS only about once every decade. This is your child's and your family's opportunity to join the select group of ECLS participants who have shared their experiences and helped improve education for students. You will receive \$15 each time you complete a survey, and your child will also receive a small gift! Our school will also receive \$300 for participating in the study.

Please log on to the website below and provide consent for your child to participate by <date>. You will also be able to complete your surveys on this website.

- Website: [myecls.ed.gov](https://myecls.ed.gov)
- Username: <ParentID>
- Initial password: <Password>

The U.S. Department of Education is working with Westat, a research organization, to conduct the study. If you have any questions, please call 1-888-204-4864 or send an email to [ECLSHelp@westat.com](mailto:ECLSHelp@westat.com). You can also learn more about the study and see examples of questions from previous ECLS studies at <https://nces.ed.gov/ecls/myECLSK2023>.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this important study!

Sincerely,

<School Principal>

## **Participation Information for the ECLS-K:2023**

What will my child be asked to do?

- Your child will be asked to complete a variety of activities, such as answering math and reading-related questions, during a one-on-one session with a trained ECLS team member. The team member will read and show illustrated tasks to the children, who can respond verbally or by pointing to the answer of their choice. Your child can skip any question he or she does not want to answer.
- The session will take place at school and last about 45-60 minutes. Our school will work with the ECLS team to make sure your child does not miss important school activities to participate in the study.

What will I be asked to do as a parent or guardian?

- You will be asked to complete a 30- to 45-minute survey. The survey can be completed online or by telephone, whichever you prefer. The ECLS team will ask questions about your family, your child's experiences in school, and learning activities your child participates in outside of school.
- You will receive \$15 when you complete the survey in each phase of the study.

What is involved for my child's principal and teacher?

- Your child's principal and teacher(s) will also complete brief surveys. Your principal will be asked questions about your child's school as well as questions about himself/herself. Teachers will be asked questions about your child's academic, social, and emotional skills as well as questions about themselves and their classrooms.
- Schools receive \$300 for participating. Teachers receive \$15 for the survey about themselves and their classrooms, and \$10 for each survey they complete about a participating student.

How often will the study activities be conducted?

- The ECLS team will conduct study activities in several phases, including twice a year when children are in kindergarten and once a year when children are in first, third, and fifth grade.

How was my child and his or her school selected to participate in the ECLS?

- The U.S. Department of Education first identified a sample of about 1,000 public and private schools, and then kindergarten students were randomly chosen within those schools. The study is designed to reflect the diversity of students and schools across the nation.

What results will be reported?

- The ECLS will share results about the nation's students overall. The study will not report results for individual children.

Will the names of participants and their responses be confidential?

- All of the information provided by children, parents, teachers, and principals 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).

*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 identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151).*