

May 18, 2020

Study of District and School Uses of Federal Education Funds

Appendix A: Notification Letters

Submitted to:

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Notification to States (IES letterhead)

Dear [Chief State School Officer],

I am writing to inform you about the U.S. Department of Education's upcoming **Study of District and School Uses of Federal Education Funds**, which will examine the distribution and uses of federal education funds under five major federal education programs. We would like to take this opportunity to explain the study purpose and design and to ask for your cooperation and support.

This study is designed to examine the extent to which federal funds add to state and school district programs, where the money goes, what it buys, and how federal programs support or hinder local flexibility for using these funds. The five federal grant programs to be examined in this study are Part A of Titles I, II, III, and IV of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* (including school improvement grants provided under Section 1003 of Title I, Part A), and Title I, Part B of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. The study will also collect early information on the allocation of funds provided under the Education Stabilization Fund (ESF) authorized under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act).

The study will collect data from a nationally representative sample of 400 school districts and 1,500 schools within those districts, including district and school surveys, and collection of fiscal data from the 400 districts (such as budgets, plans, expenditure data, and personnel and payroll data). In addition, the study includes case studies of nine school districts that include site visits and interviews with district and school staff. At the state level, the study will collect lists of subgrantees and suballocation amounts for each program, contact information for district program coordinators for each of the covered *ESEA* programs, and other information such as district grant applications for the covered programs).

As you may know, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act requires grantees to cooperate with the Department's program evaluations (Section 8306(a)(4)). At the same time, we recognize that state and local education staff have many demands on their time, and we have designed the data collection instruments to minimize the burden of participation while also providing information that will be useful to policymakers and educators.

The study is being conducted for the U.S. Department of Education by SRI International, in partnership with Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA), and they will contact your state coordinators for the above programs to provide additional information about the study. If you have any questions, you may contact the project director, Ashley Campbell of SRI International, at (720) 389-5906 or ashley.campbell@sri.com, or you may contact Stephanie Stullich here at the Department at 202-245-6468 or stephanie.stullich@ed.gov.

Again, we appreciate your cooperation and support in enabling this study to inform policymakers and educators about how federal education funds are used to support the needs of students. We thank you and your staff for providing the expertise and time needed for the success of the study.

Sincerely,

Marsha Silverberg
Associate Commissioner
National Center for Education Evaluation

Notification to districts selected for site visits (IES letterhead)

Dear [District Superintendent],

I am writing to inform you that your district has been selected to participate in the U.S. Department of Education's **Study of District and School Uses of Federal Education Funds**, which will examine the distribution and uses of federal education funds under five major federal education programs. We would like to take this opportunity to explain the study purpose and design and to ask for your cooperation and support.

This study is designed to examine the extent to which federal funds add to state and school district programs, where the money goes, what it buys, and how federal programs support or hinder local flexibility for using these funds. The five federal grant programs to be examined in this study are Part A of Titles I, II, III, and IV of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* (including school improvement grants provided under Section 1003 of Title I, Part A), and Title I, Part B of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. The study will also collect early information on the allocation of funds provided under the Education Stabilization Fund (ESF) authorized under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act).

The study will collect data from a nationally representative sample of 400 school districts and 1,500 schools within those districts, including district and school surveys, and collection of fiscal data from the 400 districts (such as budgets, plans, expenditure data, and personnel and payroll data). In addition, the study includes case studies of nine school districts that include site visits and interviews with district and school staff. Your district has been selected for both the nationally representative sample and for the case studies.

Data collection for the study will include three activities occurring at both the district and school levels. These activities include:

- 1. District and school surveys.** Your district and up to four schools within your district will be asked to complete surveys designed to obtain information on how districts and schools spend federal funds from the programs that are the focus of this study. It is anticipated that surveys will require 60 minutes of district staff time and 45 minutes of school staff time.
- 2. Resource allocation data collection.** To facilitate this portion of the data collection, the study team has created an Excel-based workbook that has been customized to the accounting classifications used in your state; this workbook will request data on expenditures by funding program, as well as personnel and payroll data such as percent full-time equivalent, job classification, salary, assigned location, and other sources of funding for the position. Districts will be asked to provide both district-level information as well as school-level data for up to four schools within the district.
- 3. Site visits.** During the site visit, we will interview key district staff as well as school staff from [insert school names]. We anticipate conducting up to 26 interviews at each site across the district and schools. Interviews will last up to 90 minutes and participation of each individual is voluntary. We will schedule visits at a time that is convenient for both district and school staff.

As you may know, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act requires grantees to cooperate with the Department's program evaluations (Section 8306(a)(4)). At the same time, we recognize that district and school staff have many demands on their time, and we have designed the data collection instruments to minimize the burden of participation while also providing information that will be useful to policymakers and educators.

If your district has a process for researchers to obtain permission to conduct a study within the district, please contact us by [date] to inform us of this requirement. Additionally, please provide instructions for obtaining research approval.

The study team has secured Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance for this evaluation and will follow all legal and ethical requirements to protect participants. The study team will use highly reliable data collection procedures and instruments that are appropriate for the intended respondents, do not contain sensitive questions, and minimize burden, and will provide secure environments for all data collected for the study.

The study is being conducted for the U.S. Department of Education by SRI International, in partnership with Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA), and they will contact your state coordinators for the above programs to provide additional information about the study. If you have any questions, you may contact the project director, Ashley Campbell of SRI International, at (720) 389-5906 or ashley.campbell@sri.com, or you may contact Stephanie Stullich here at the Department at 202-245-6468 or stephanie.stullich@ed.gov.

Findings from the study will be disseminated through a cross-cutting final report that provides a comprehensive overview of the study's findings and includes comparative analyses across programs, as well as six program-specific evaluation briefs that summarize findings for each of the programs in the study. We will share this information with you when the report and briefs are released.

Again, we appreciate your cooperation and support in enabling this study to inform policymakers and educators about how federal education funds are used to support the needs of students. We thank you and your staff for providing the expertise and time needed for the success of the study.

Sincerely,

Marsha Silverberg
Associate Commissioner
National Center for Education Evaluation

cc: [District Chief Financial Officer]

Notification letter for districts without a site visit (IES letterhead)

Dear [District Superintendent],

I am writing to inform you that your district has been selected to participate in the U.S. Department of Education's **Study of District and School Uses of Federal Education Funds**, which will examine the distribution and uses of federal education funds under five major federal education programs. We would like to take this opportunity to explain the study purpose and design and to ask for your cooperation and support.

This study is designed to examine the extent to which federal funds add to state and school district programs, where the money goes, what it buys, and how federal programs support or hinder local flexibility for using these funds. The five federal grant programs to be examined in this study are Part A of Titles I, II, III, and IV of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* (including school improvement grants provided under Section 1003 of Title I, Part A), and Title I, Part B of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. The study will also collect early information on the allocation of funds provided under the Education Stabilization Fund (ESF) authorized under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act).

The study will collect data from a nationally representative sample of 400 school districts and 1,500 schools within those districts, including district and school surveys, and collection of fiscal data from the 400 districts (such as budgets, plans, expenditure data, and personnel and payroll data). In addition, the study includes case studies of nine school districts that include site visits and interviews with district and school staff. Your district has been selected for the nationally representative sample.

Data collection for the study will include three activities occurring at both the district and school levels. These activities include:

- 1. District and school surveys.** Your district and up to four schools within your district will be asked to complete surveys designed to obtain information on how districts and schools spend federal funds from the programs that are the focus of this study. It is anticipated that surveys will require 60 minutes of district staff time and 45 minutes of school staff time.
- 2. Resource allocation data collection.** To facilitate this portion of the data collection, the study team has created an Excel-based workbook that has been customized to the accounting classifications used in your state; this workbook will request data on expenditures by funding program, as well as personnel and payroll data such as percent full-time equivalent, job classification, salary, assigned location, and other sources of funding for the position. Districts will be asked to provide both district-level information as well as school-level data for up to four schools within the district.

As you may know, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act requires grantees to cooperate with the Department's program evaluations (Section 8306(a)(4)). At the same time, we recognize that district and school staff have many demands on their time, and we have designed the data collection instruments to minimize the burden of participation while also providing information that will be useful to policymakers and educators.

If your district has a process for researchers to obtain permission to conduct a study within the district, please contact us by [date] to inform us of this requirement. Additionally, please provide instructions for obtaining research approval.

The study team has secured Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance for this evaluation and will follow all legal and ethical requirements to protect participants. The study team will use highly reliable data collection procedures and instruments that are appropriate for the intended respondents, do not contain sensitive questions, and minimize burden, and will provide secure environments for all data collected for the study.

The study is being conducted for the U.S. Department of Education by SRI International, in partnership with Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA), and they will contact your state coordinators for the above programs to provide additional information about the study. If you have any questions, you may contact the project director, Ashley Campbell of SRI International, at (720) 389-5906 or ashley.campbell@sri.com, or you may contact Stephanie Stullich here at the Department at 202-245-6468 or stephanie.stullich@ed.gov.

Findings from the study will be disseminated through a cross-cutting final report that provides a comprehensive overview of the study's findings and includes comparative analyses across programs, as well as six program-specific evaluation briefs that summarize findings for each of the programs in the study. We will share this information with you when the report and briefs are released.

Again, we appreciate your cooperation and support in enabling this study to inform policymakers and educators about how federal education funds are used to support the needs of students. We thank you and your staff for providing the expertise and time needed for the success of the study.

Sincerely,

Marsha Silverberg
Associate Commissioner
National Center for Education Evaluation

cc: [District Chief Financial Officer]