

Memorandum

United States Department of Education
Institute of Education Sciences
National Center for Education Statistics

DATE: May 6, 2021
TO: Robert Sivinski, OMB
THROUGH: Carrie Clarady, NCES
FROM: Jill McCarroll, NCES
SUBJECT: Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2023-24 (ECLS-K:2024)¹ Preschool Round Removal Change Request (OMB# 1850-0750 v.23)

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2023-24 (ECLS-K:2024) will be the fourth cohort in the series of early childhood longitudinal studies conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education. To date, no ECLS kindergarten cohort studies have included a preschool round of data collection. NCES tested the viability of the inclusion of a national preschool round during the 2020 preschool field test. From the results of this 2020 field test of the preschool round, NCES has determined there are significant risks inherent to a successful high-quality national data collection, largely related to achieving acceptable response rates and sample yield. For example, while the preschool field test found a higher eligibility rate for the preschool parent survey than was expected, response rates fell significantly under expectations. Additionally, one of the key assumptions tested in the field test was whether children in sampled households would matriculate into sampled study schools; the field test found fewer sampled students per school than expected per original study design specifications. **Following analysis of the preschool field test results, NCES has decided to not go forward with the national ECLS-K:2024 preschool round in spring 2023. No other planned procedures or features of the study will change.**

The ECLS-K:2024 will follow the cohort of students who will be kindergartners in the 2023-24 school year from their kindergarten year (2023-24) until the spring of 2029, when most will be in fifth grade. However, the ECLS-K:2024 will no longer include a preschool round of data collection in the spring prior to the children's kindergarten year, i.e., spring 2023. The first national data collection will now occur in fall 2023, when the cohort's students are in kindergarten.

The ECLS program studies deliver national data on children's status at birth and at various points thereafter; children's transitions to nonparental care, early care and education programs, and school; and children's experiences and growth through the elementary grades. The ECLS-K:2024 will be exceptionally broad in its scope and coverage. The study will advance research in child development and early learning by providing a detailed and comprehensive source of current information on children's early learning and development, transitions into kindergarten and beyond, and progress through school. Data will be collected relevant to emerging policy-related domains and areas not fully measured in previous ECLS program studies, as well as to allow for comparisons to two other nationally representative kindergarten cohorts (i.e., the ECLS-K and ECLS-K:2011) that experienced different policy, educational, demographic, and economic environments than children are expected to experience in the years of the ECLS-K:2024.

The ECLS-K:2024 will focus on children's early school experiences continuing through the fifth grade. It is designed to provide data that can be used to analyze the relationships between a wide range of family, school, community, and individual variables and children's development, early learning, and performance in school. The study includes collection of data from parents, teachers, and school administrators, as well as direct child assessments. In later

¹ The upcoming ECLS initially planned to follow the cohort of students in kindergarten in 2022-23, and the study was named the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023). In February 2021, NCES requested that due to the coronavirus pandemic, the study be delayed by 1 year. OMB approved this change in April 2021, and language in Part A of OMB# 1850-0750 v.22 added at that time alerts the public to this change. (Part A text: "While the ECLS-K:2023 is referenced throughout this package, in early 2021 the timing of the study was changed due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic such that all upcoming data collection activities will be delayed by 1 year. The study will now be the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2023-24 (ECLS-K:2024).")

rounds, child questionnaires will also be collected. While all of these components will be included in the study, the ECLS-K:2024 is designed such that the child will be the unit of analysis; the study will also be representative at the teacher and school levels at the kindergarten year.

The request to conduct the ECLS-K:2024 preschool field test was first approved in November 2019 with change memos approved in January 2020, July 2020, and February 2021 (OMB# 1850-0750 v.19-22). The activities outlined in this request were for the 2020 preschool field test data collection, which has since concluded. This request is to update Parts A and B of the package to note the removal of the national preschool round. As no household, state, district, school, teacher, or parent contacts had begun for the national study, the removal of the preschool round does not necessitate contacting any such entities. Rather, this request is being submitted to alert the public of the removal of the national preschool round as noted in Part A and Part B of the preschool field test package.² The new text is highlighted below in red text. This change request will be accompanied by a published 30-day notice in the Federal Register. Approval for future field tests and data collection rounds will be requested in separate submissions, the next of which will be the request for the fall 2022 kindergarten-first grade field test and national study recruitment to be submitted in summer 2021.

The change requested here does not affect the approved total cost to the federal government nor the estimated respondent burden for the concluded preschool field test. It is expected that the removal of the national preschool data collection will affect the costs to the federal government for future work, the clearances for which will be requested in future OMB packages. The revised cost, which is not currently known, will be included in those future data collection packages, the first of which will be the request for the kindergarten-first grade field test and national study recruitment, which is currently planned for submission to OMB later in summer 2021.

Changes to Part A

A.1.1 Purpose of this Submission

The ECLS-K:2023 will provide data about the population of children who will be kindergartners in the 2022-23 school year. In addition, the ECLS-K:2023 ~~will go~~ **considered going** beyond its predecessor kindergarten cohort studies by adding a round of data collection in the spring prior to children’s kindergarten year, known as the “preschool round.”¹ Collecting parent data beginning in preschool ~~will~~ **would have enabled** the study to measure influences on children’s development before entry into formal schooling, including children’s home environments and access to early care and education, **without relying on retrospective parent reports. However, inclusion of the preschool national round was dependent on a successful test of assumptions in the preschool field test, the work of which is outlined in this package. In spring of 2021 following the analysis of the 2020 preschool field test data that were collected following approval of this present OMB package, NCES determined that the field test experiences did not support the successful inclusion of a preschool national data collection. References to the national preschool round have not been removed from this package; however, the first national data collection round will now be the national fall kindergarten round.**²

The spring 2022 round of data collection is referred to as the “preschool round” for ease of presentation. However, the sample will include not only children in preschool or an early care and education (ECE) arrangement, but also those not in preschool or ECE.

² The 2020 preschool field test identified several technical risks to a successful, high-quality national data collection utilizing the initially planned design. Risks largely related to achieving acceptable response rates and sample yield.

Changes to Part B

B.1 Universe, Sample Design, and Estimation

The **original design of the** Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2022-23 (ECLS-K:2023) includes ~~sd~~ a preschool sample to collect information on children’s experiences prior to kindergarten. **In May 2021 NCES made the decision to not go forward with this preschool round of data collection; however the planned design for this round had it proceeded is discussed in this package, as this design informed the development of the 2020 preschool field test.**

² The public had previously been informed that the preschool national round was dependent on the results of the preschool field test. The initial statement to the public remains in Part A (emphasis added): “This submission describes the ECLS-K:2023 preschool field test data collection, which will occur in 2020. Sampling and operational procedures **will be tested to determine if the preschool data collection is feasible to include in the national** ECLS-K:2023 prior to the fall 2022 kindergarten round.”