

**Early Childhood Longitudinal Study,  
Kindergarten Class of 2023-24  
(ECLS-K:2024)**

**Kindergarten and First-Grade National Data Collection  
and Transfer School Recruitment**

**OMB# 1850-0750 v.29**

**Supporting Statement**

**Part B**

**National Center for Education Statistics  
U.S. Department of Education**

**October 2022  
revised January 2023  
revised April 2023  
revised October 2023**

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## **Part B – Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods**

### **B.1 Universe, Sample Design, and Estimation**

The ECLS-K:2024 national sample of children was selected using a multi-stage probability design. The precision requirements, sample design, and procedures for computing sampling weights and variance are discussed below.

#### **B.1.1 National Sample Precision Requirements**

The objective of the ECLS-K:2024 is to have a sample that can provide precise cross-sectional and longitudinal estimates of children in a particular school year, similar to the ECLS-K and the ECLS-K:2011. The sample plan was designed to achieve nationally representative and precise estimates for the cohort of kindergarten children in the 2023-24 academic year and the study years that follow. For this reason, the precision requirements that drive the overall sample design are those for the kindergarten children.

The kindergarten sample requirements for the ECLS-K:2024 are similar to those for the previous ECLS program kindergarten cohort studies, to obtain a minimum level of reliability for child-level estimates pertaining to analytical subgroups, such as Asians, Asian and Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders (APIs)<sup>1</sup>, Blacks, Hispanics, private school kindergartners, and language minority students. Four precision requirements form the basis for the kindergarten sample design and plans for the follow-ups in subsequent rounds. These requirements are the ability to do the following:

- Measure a relative change of 20 percent in proportions across waves;
- Measure a relative change of 5 percent in a mean assessment score across waves;
- Estimate a proportion for each wave with a coefficient of variation (CV) of 10 percent or less; and
- Estimate a mean assessment score for each wave with a CV of 2.5 percent or less.

These precision requirements involve estimating changes over time and estimating the precision of estimates in the fifth-grade (i.e., final) data collection, and they are similar to those used in the ECLS-K and the ECLS-K:2011 cohorts. For the ECLS-K, it was determined that a fifth-grade sample of about 10,300 students would be adequate to meet the precision requirements overall and for most subgroups. The assumptions underlying the sample size were: a two-tailed test of differences with significance level alpha of 0.05 and power beta of at least 80 percent; estimating proportions of 30 and 36 percent (i.e., 20 percent relative change); a correlation between assessment scores from different waves of 0.6; and a design effect of 2.0. These assumptions were revised during the course of the ECLS-K for several reasons: the addition of subgroups of analytic interest such as language minority students; higher than expected design effects for assessment scores; and higher than expected correlation of assessment scores over time. The fifth-grade data collection began with 16,143 sample students and resulted in 12,129 eligible fifth-grade students and 11,820 respondents, exceeding the 10,300 students in the initial projections. While the initial assumptions that drove the sample design were not always accurate separately, the overall effect of the losses was very close to expectation. For example, in several rounds of the ECLS-K, the assumed moving rate was lower than the actual moving rate, but this was offset by higher completion rates.

For the ECLS-K:2011, the assumptions were revised based on the previous experience. A fifth-grade sample of about 11,226 students was determined to be adequate to meet the precision requirements

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<sup>1</sup> Both Asians and APIs are subgroups that meet the precision criterion. Although APIs are not an acceptable reporting group, per OMB standards, they have been listed because this subgroup is used throughout the sampling processes, for the purposes of oversampling.

overall and for most subgroups. The assumptions underlying the sample size were: a two-tailed test of differences with significance level alpha of 0.05 and power beta of at least 80 percent; estimating proportions of 30 and 36 percent (i.e., 20 percent relative change); a correlation between assessment scores from different waves of 0.75; and a design effect of 4.0. The fifth-grade data collection resulted in 12,346 respondents.

For the ECLS-K:2024, the sample size was determined by first solving for the sample size needed under simple random sampling with 100 percent overlapping samples between waves using the formula:

$$n = \frac{\left[ z_{1-\alpha/2} \sqrt{2\bar{P}\bar{Q}} - z_{1-\beta} \sqrt{P_1Q_1 + P_2Q_2 - 2\rho\sqrt{P_1Q_1P_2Q_2}} \right]^2}{(P_2 - P_1)^2},$$

where  $n$  is the sample size per wave,  $\alpha$  is the significance level,  $\beta$  is the power term equal,  $z$  has the standard normal distribution,  $\rho$  is the correlation between two waves,  $P_1$  and  $P_2$  are the two proportions

being compared,  $Q_1=1-P_1$ ,  $Q_2=1-P_2$ ,  $\bar{P} = \frac{P_1+P_2}{2}$ , and  $\bar{Q}=1-\bar{P}$ . When  $\alpha=0.05$ ,  $\beta=0.80$ ,  $\rho=0.75$ ,  $P_1=0.30$  and  $P_2=0.36$ , the minimum sample size needed per wave for subgroup analysis is 241. Assuming a design effect of 4 (based on the ECLS-K and ECLS-K:2011), this sample size would need to be further increased by a factor of 4 to 964, since the effective sample size is equal to the sample size actually obtained divided by the design effect.

The assumptions used to arrive at the sample size by the end of the study applied the assumed rates at which students move from the base year sampled school to other schools. A mover is defined as a child who moves out of the original sample school. The rates at which the movers will be subsampled, the assumed rates at which the subsampled movers will be located, and the assumed student completion rates for the base year sample. From the ECLS-K and ECLS-K:2011, the ECLS program has good estimates about the movements of students after each year and how successful the study program has been at locating them, and the ECLS-K:2024 modeled the assumed rates for this study on this experience. In the ECLS-K, students who moved to another school (not residence) were followed at a rate of 50 percent in first grade, slightly higher in third grade so that all language minority students were retained, and slightly lower in fifth grade to accommodate a reduction in the overall sample size. The fifth-grade subsampling rates varied according to student characteristics with the highest rate applied to language minority students. For the ECLS-K:2011, movers were subsampled at a rate of 50 percent in all rounds unless they were in a subgroup of interest (APIs, language minority, or had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)/Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)); those were followed with certainty. As a result, the net rate of following movers in ECLS-K:2011 was 65 percent; a similar percentage is expected for the ECLS-K:2024.

For the ECLS-K:2024, originally a sample of 1,000 responding schools (800 public and 200 private) with an average sample take of 21 students in each school (yielding approximately 21,000 sampled students) was planned. However, based on district and school recruitment difficulties, the target sample size was revised to 850 responding schools with an average sample take of 25 students in each school. The number of students sampled at each school was increased to 25 students to maintain the expected student cooperation rate. That is, the revised sampling strategy is expected to still yield approximately 21,000 sampled students. Based on cooperation rates observed in the ECLS-K:2011, it was expected that this revised sample will yield 18,060 completes<sup>2</sup> at the end of base year and approximately 11,655 completes at the end of fifth grade, as shown in table B-1. This sample size for fifth grade is somewhat smaller than the sample sizes achieved for the ECLS-K (11,820) and ECLS-K:2011 (12,346). However, applying the

<sup>2</sup> To be counted as a base year complete, the study must obtain child- or parent-level data during kindergarten.

sampling rates for subgroups of interest described in the next section, the resulting sample size should satisfy the precision requirements.

Using the ECLS-K:2011 to inform the sample design of ECLS-K:2024 followed the model used in the past. ECLS-K estimates were used to guide the sample size decisions for ECLS-K:2011 and even though there were minor decreases in response rates between the ECLS-K and ECLS-K:2011, the ECLS-K:2011 exceeded the sample size target. However, thus far in recruitment for the ECLS-K:2024, the volume of district- and school-level refusals has been higher than anticipated and the study will fall short of the expected response rate of 60 percent that was based on these earlier studies. To increase the base year sample size of schools, as of early 2023 substitute schools have been added to the list of sampled schools to replace the nonresponding districts and schools. Substitute schools were selected for the PSUs with high refusal rates or where the number of cooperating schools was small. These substitutes have been selected from the set of schools in non-refusal districts. In some cases, for example when there was only one district in a PSU and they had refused, the substitute schools were selected from a new PSU in the same sampling strata. If the amount of refusals from substitute schools is high, additional substitutes may be selected to supplement the initial set of substitutes. The goal of school substitution is to get close to the targets of 850 responding schools and approximately 21,000 base year students.

At the child-level, response rates for ECLS program studies have traditionally been very high. However, if these are too low causing the number of respondents at the end of a round to fall below expectation, the rate in which movers are followed can be adjusted as a way to increase the sample size for the next round. During data collection study staff will closely monitor response rates and determine any potential modifications to sampling procedures that become necessary.

In table B-1, the starting sample for each subsequent round after the base year is the number of base year completes. In each subsequent round after the base year, 50 percent of movers who move out of the original sample schools will be subsampled, unless they are a member of a subgroup of interest (APIs, language minority,<sup>3</sup> or have an IEP/IFSP<sup>4</sup>); these are followed with certainty.

Table B-1. ECLS-K:2024 expected sample size at each wave

Study year	Beginning wave sample size <sup>1</sup>	Mover rate <sup>2</sup>	Mover sub-sampling rate	Locating rate <sup>2</sup>	Base year response rate	Mover completion rate <sup>2</sup>	Nonmover completion rate <sup>2</sup>	End wave sample size	End wave number of completes
Kindergarten <sup>3,4</sup>	21,000	†	†	†	0.86	†	†	18,060	18,060
Spring first <sup>5</sup>	18,060	0.18	0.65	0.90	-	0.65	0.90	16,711	14,564
Spring third <sup>5</sup>	18,060	0.36	0.65	0.90	-	0.65	0.90	15,362	12,875
Spring fifth <sup>5</sup>	18,060	0.49	0.65	0.90	-	0.65	0.90	14,387	11,655

† Not applicable

<sup>1</sup> All base year respondents retained for each wave.

<sup>2</sup> Mover rate, locating rate, and completion rates are from the ECLS-K:2011.

<sup>3</sup> The base year response rate is from the ECLS-K:2011.

<sup>4</sup> The end of wave sample size will include completes for either the fall or spring data collection.

<sup>5</sup> The starting sample for each round after the base year is the base year completes.

<sup>3</sup> Home language for each selected child will likely be identified through school or parent report.

<sup>4</sup> In the ECLS-K:2024, there will be data from both parents and schools about children’s IFSPs and IEPs. If a child has an IFSP/IEP based on either school or parent report in any round, the child will be followed with certainty in all rounds from that point onward. In the ECLS-K:2011, parents were asked about IFSPs, but not IEPs; schools were asked about IEPs. The same is true of API or language minority children. That is, if they are identified to be followed they will continue to be followed even if their status changes.

The four precision requirements are of equal importance for Hispanics, Blacks, and all other non-API races. However, most of these subgroups do not have an impact on determining the oversampling rates for special groups because their expected sample sizes exceed the required sample size for meeting the requirements. At the end of the fifth-grade data collection for the ECLS-K, the distribution of completed cases among non-API race/ethnicity was 11.0 percent Black, 19.1 percent Hispanic, and 61.4 percent all other non-API races. At the end of the fifth-grade data collection for the ECLS-K:2011, the distribution of completed cases among non-API race/ethnicity was 10.0 percent Black, 26.7 percent Hispanic, and 53.9 percent all other non-API races. For the ECLS-K:2024, the initial expectation was that the study would have approximately 1,535 Blacks, 2,800 Hispanics, and 6,025 children of other non-API races at the end of fifth grade.<sup>5</sup> These sample sizes are large enough to satisfy precision requirements. However, a more recent analyses of the planned ECLS-K:2024 sample suggested that the number of Black children at the end of fifth grade ran the risk of falling short of the number of Black children to meet NCES precision requirements. As such, in addition to oversampling for API's, oversamples at the school sampling stage were used to increase the number of Black children sampled for the ECLS-K:2024, as described below.

Language minority children are another subgroup of analytical importance. It is expected that 13.5 percent of the base year sample and 16.5 percent of the fifth-grade sample will be language minority children, based on the data from the ECLS-K:2011. The higher percentage of language minority children in the fifth-grade year is due to language minority movers being retained with certainty. Language minority children will be identified based on the languages spoken at home, as identified by the school and in the parent survey. For the ECLS-K:2024, with a base year sample of approximately 18,060 completes and a fifth-grade sample of approximately 11,655 completes, it is expected that the study will have approximately 2,440 language minority completes in the base year and approximately 1,920 language minority completes in the fifth-grade year.

## **B.1.2 National Sample Design**

The sample of children included in the ECLS-K:2024 was selected using a multi-stage probability design. The first-stage or primary sampling units (PSUs) is geographic areas that are counties or groups of counties. PSUs were oversampled based on their estimated number of API kindergarten students. In the second stage, samples of public and private schools with kindergarten programs<sup>6</sup> were selected within the sampled PSUs. PSUs were selected with probability proportional to measures of size that takes into account the desired oversampling of API students. In the second stage, schools were oversampled based on the expected number of Black or API kindergartners.<sup>7</sup> The third stage sampling units for the national sample were children enrolled in kindergarten programs, and children of kindergarten age in ungraded schools, selected within each sampled school. The sample of children were selected accounting for an oversample of API children.

### **B.1.2.1 Sampling PSUs**

The first sampling stage is the selection of geographic areas or PSUs. Clustering the sample into relatively compact geographic units is necessary to control the cost of data collection. The PSUs used for the ECLS-K:2024 are counties, or groups of counties, instead of states or public school districts. In most cases, state is too large a unit to reduce data collection costs and administratively public school districts do not include private schools so the mapping of which private schools fall within the geographic boundaries of

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<sup>5</sup> Estimated using Census race/ethnicity estimates of the population of children under the age of five, after accounting for the oversample of APIs.

<sup>6</sup> Includes transitional kindergartens and ungraded classrooms that educate children of kindergarten age.

<sup>7</sup> The expected number of completes for key subgroups was looked at, once the final NAEP school lists were available, in the sampled PSUs. At that point, the expected number of Black students was determined to be smaller than initial expectations. While the PSU (first stage) sample had already been selected and the within school sampling algorithm (third stage) had already been programmed, it was determined that making a minor change to the school selection procedure (second stage) would be sufficient to increase the final number of Black students to a more adequate level to meet study precision requirements.

public school districts is not clear. In addition, district-level enrollment would be needed to reflect the enrollment of the corresponding private schools under such a design. Counties, on the other hand, have well-defined boundaries and the use of combined counties has the additional benefit of providing a more heterogeneous area, which may reduce the variance of estimates due to clustering.

### *Sampling Frame*

The PSU sampling frame for the ECLS-K:2024 was created from the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the Census Bureau.<sup>8</sup> The 2018 ACS produces estimates for the 3,142 counties in the 50 states plus the District of Columbia. Counties or groups of contiguous counties were used to form PSUs that respect state boundaries and have a minimum population size of 15,000.<sup>9</sup>

### *PSU Measure of Size*

The PSU frame was updated to reflect the most recent ACS estimates of kindergartners. The PSUs was further customized by combining units to yield the required minimum number of kindergartners.<sup>10</sup> A stratified sample of 100 PSUs was selected with probabilities proportional to size.<sup>11</sup> The PSU measure of size was a function of the number of kindergartners in the PSU. Members of the API minority group for which oversampling is required contributed more to the measure of size, so that the probability of sampling PSUs with a large proportion of APIs was increased. The measure of size for a PSU was the number of 5-year-olds who are not API plus 2.5 times the number of API 5-year-olds.

The oversampling rate for the API group was computed as the target number of completed cases in the API group divided by the expected number of completed cases in the API group without oversampling. Using the ECLS-K:2024 target for a subgroup of 964 (see section 2), and assuming that 4.8 percent of 5-year-olds are APIs (as estimated during the sample design based on the estimate of 0 to 5-year-olds from the 2015 ACS<sup>12</sup>), then the API oversampling rate is 1.7 (the target sample divided by the expected yield). To account for different data collection and measurement issues,<sup>13</sup> the study will oversample the API using a factor of 2.5 instead of 1.7. This is the same factor used in the ECLS-K and ECLS-K:2011. These collections had 971 and 1,135 completed APIs at the end of the fifth-grade data collections, respectively.

### *PSU Stratification and Sample Selection*

PSUs with large measures of size were included with certainty. In the ECLS-K:2011 the study identified 10 certainty PSUs, each with measures of size large enough so that they had an approximately 75 percent (or higher) selection probability. For the ECLS-K:2024, the study reduced the certainty criteria to two-thirds (or higher) of the certainty value. Using this definition there were 20 certainty PSUs.<sup>14</sup> These 20

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<sup>8</sup> The frame of PSUs was created prior to the release of county-level data from the 2020 Census. The 2018 American Community Survey contained the most recent national estimates and was therefore used to define the PSUs for the ECLS-K:2024. Although in 2021 it was determined that the study's data collection activities would be delayed by 1 year (i.e., the national base year was originally 2022-23 but was delayed 1 year due to the COVID-19 pandemic), the sampling of the national and field test PSUs occurred in 2020 before the delay was established.

<sup>9</sup> This population size was selected to potentially yield a large enough sample size of kindergarten-aged children.

<sup>10</sup> For the ECLS-K:2024 this number is expected to be 369. This is based on the calculation  $(10 * 21) / .57$ , where 10 is the average number of responding schools in a PSU, 21 is the average number of sampled kindergartners in a school, and .57 is the estimated private school response rate. The private school response rate is used for this estimate because it is lower than the expected response rate for public schools and is, therefore, more conservative. At the time that this sampling work was completed, it was planned that 21 students would be sampled in each participating school. As noted, the number of students sampled in each school has since been increased to 25 due to the lower than expected number of cooperating schools.

<sup>11</sup> This is the same number of PSUs as in the ECLS-K design. The ECLS-K:2011 design had fewer PSUs; however when designing the ECLS-K:2024, given the potential changes in response rates, using the larger number of PSU's provides extra flexibility.

<sup>12</sup> The oversampling rate was determined in 2018 during the contract the proposal stage. At that time, the 2015 version was the most recently available ACS file.

<sup>13</sup> These issues include schools having missing or erroneous child race/ethnicity data or child race/ethnicity data that do not comply with OMB definitions.

<sup>14</sup> Each of the certainty PSUs were created using single counties. In two instances, counties were split into two certainty PSUs using smaller unites of geography (city or Census Subdivision).

certainity PSUs represented approximately 20 percent of the expected kindergarten students in the United States. The remaining noncertainty PSUs were then grouped into strata. The number of strata was equal to one-half the number of noncertainty PSUs so that two PSUs could be sampled from each stratum. The grouping of the PSUs into the strata was done using *WesStrat*. This software identifies the best stratification scheme for minimizing the between-PSU variance, while attempting to make the stratum population sizes approximately equal. Census region, level of urbanization, minority status (e.g., percent of the population in the PSU who are Black, Hispanic, APIs, or American Indian/Alaskan Native), and income level were used as the stratification variables in *WesStrat*. These stratification variables were determined to be the most pertinent to a school-based survey. Other variables on the PSU frame are number of households, area, distance,<sup>15</sup> and state. These variables were used when combining the small counties into multi-county PSUs.

A sample of 100 PSUs was selected and the PSUs with large measures of size included in the sample with a probability of one as described above. Selection of two noncertainty PSUs within the noncertainty strata were performed with probabilities proportional to size. Durbin's Method was used to select the two PSUs, as was done in the ECLS-K and the ECLS-K:2011.

To increase the likelihood of achieving the school and student participation goals, substitute PSUs for each non-certainty PSU were identified. In original PSUs with low cooperation and too few schools to yield enough cooperating schools, the corresponding substitute PSU were used to select additional schools. It is expected that approximately 30 substitute PSUs will be used in the ECLS-K:2024.

In the ECLS-K, replicate weights were computed taking into account the Durbin method of PSU selection. This method of computing replicate weights for variance estimation caused the variance estimates to be unstable. In the ECLS-K:2011 the study computed replicate weights as if the PSUs were selected with probability proportional to size, discounting the Durbin method. This method produces stable and conservative estimates of variance and is, therefore, preferred because no estimation method is both stable and unbiased for the design. In the ECLS-K:2024 the study plans to compute the variances as done in the ECLS-K:2011.

### **B.1.2.2 Sampling Schools**

The second stage of sampling involves selecting samples of public and private schools that have kindergarten programs or ungraded classrooms that serve kindergarten-aged children, from within the sampled PSUs. The targeted sample is 170 private and 680 public schools, for a total of 850 schools. The study initially sampled larger numbers of schools to account for estimated school nonresponse. In the ECLS-K, private schools participated at a rate of 65 percent and public schools at a rate of 70 percent, while in the ECLS-K:2011 these rates were 61 percent for private schools and 63 percent for public schools.

#### *School Frame Construction and Measure of Size*

Within each sampled PSU, the sampling frame is the list of all public and private schools offering kindergarten or have ungraded classrooms that serve kindergarten-aged children. For the ECLS-K:2024, the study used the sampling frames that Westat created for the 2022 and 2023 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).<sup>16</sup> The source for the 2023 NAEP public school frame are the 2020-21 Common Core of Data (CCD) and the source for the 2022 NAEP private school frame are 2019-20 Private School Universe Survey (PSS). NAEP supplements this frame with schools with the appropriate NAEP grades that are not found in the CCD and PSS. The public school sampling frame was ready around April 2022 and the private school sampling frame was created around May 2021. It included all

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<sup>15</sup> Maximum within PSU distance of 100 miles.

<sup>16</sup> The NAEP private school frame is created every two years. The most recent frame was created for the 2022 NAEP.



grades from pre-kindergarten to grade 12 (even though NAEP only selects students in grades 4, 8, and 12). School enrollment by grade and race/ethnicity as reported in the CCD and PSS is included in the NAEP school sampling frame. Charter schools are included in the public portion of the school frame and they were sampled in the same manner as all other schools from this frame. Since charter schools are more likely to be created or dissolved than other public schools, particular attention will be paid to these schools during the frame updating process.

Within each PSU, schools with fewer than 21 kindergarten students were clustered together before sampling to ensure that the target sample size of about 21,000 kindergarten students in 850 responding schools is met.<sup>17</sup> Schools (or combined schools) were selected with probability proportional to size; oversampling of schools based on their number of API or Black kindergartners was done. The weighted measure of size was constructed taking into account the oversampling factor of APIs that was used in the PSU sampling stage and an oversampling factor for Blacks, as follows.

$$m_{ij} = 2.5 \times n_{API_{ij}} + 1.5 \times n_{BLK_{ij}} + n_{OTH_{ij}}$$

where 2.5 is the oversampling rate for APIs,  $n_{API_{ij}}$  is the estimated counts of API kindergarten students in the school, 1.5 is the oversampling rate for Black students,  $n_{BLK_{ij}}$  is the estimated counts of API kindergarten students in the school, and  $n_{OTH_{ij}}$  is the estimated count of all other kindergarten students in school  $j$  in PSU  $i$ .

The target number of sampled schools per PSU was calculated separately for public and for private schools and adjusted upward to offset anticipated school response and eligibility rates. The number of schools allocated to each PSU is proportional to the weighted measure of size of the PSU.

#### *Stratification and Selection of Schools*

Public and private schools constitute distinct sampling strata. The public school sample was selected using a traditional nested two-stage design. Within each PSU, public schools were ranked by measure of size and partitioned into classes of roughly equal aggregate measure of size. Within each size class, schools were sorted in a serpentine manner by the proportion of Black students.<sup>18</sup> For the private school stratum, schools were grouped within PSU by affiliation (religious, nonsectarian, or unknown/mixed) and then sorted in a serpentine manner by the measure of size.

The selection of both public and private schools was systematic, with probability proportional to the measure of size  $m$  described above. This measure of size gives schools with greater numbers of API and Black students a higher probability of selection without inordinately increasing the sampling errors of non-minority estimates.

#### *Supplemental School Sample*

Because the school source files came from the 2020-21 CCD and 2019-20 PSS and may not have had complete coverage of non-traditional schools such as charter schools, the study completed a new school search procedure in the spring of 2023 prior to kindergarten data collection to ensure that coverage was as complete as possible for schools offering kindergarten. This procedure was based on the experience obtained from the ECLS-K and ECLS-K:2011.

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<sup>17</sup> At the time that this sampling work was completed, it was planned that 21 students would be sampled in each participating school. As noted, the number of students sampled in each school has since been increased to 25 due to the lower than expected number of cooperating schools.

<sup>18</sup> Schools were sorted by percent of Black students but not always from smallest to largest within the size class. For example, in size class A, schools were sorted from smallest to largest percent of Black students. In size class B, schools were sorted from largest to smallest percent of Black students. In size class C, schools were sorted again from smallest to largest percent of Black students, etc. The list of sorted schools were then put together before selection.

For each public school district and Catholic diocese having one or more schools sampled, study staff checked the relevant website to identify any additional schools expected to offer kindergarten or have ungraded classrooms that serve kindergarten-aged children in academic year 2023-24 that were missing from the list. Since a public-school district or diocese may cut across county or even state lines, each new school was associated with the correct county, and hence the correct PSU, before checking to see whether it was truly new. Bona fide new schools were given an appropriate chance of being sampled.

The identification of non-Catholic private schools was different than what was done for the ECLS-K and ECLS-K:2011. In the ECLS-K, lists of schools from different sources (such as the Yellow Pages) were compiled and then matched against the PSS list frame to remove duplicates. Further screening had to be undertaken by telephone to verify new school status. After all new schools were identified, a supplementary sample of the new schools was drawn. This procedure had a very low yield of eligible, participating schools (only 36% of the sampled schools participated). Given the small return for the effort expended in identifying new non-Catholic private schools in the ECLS-K, this procedure was modified for the ECLS-K:2011. The list of non-Catholic schools on the PSS was compared to those on the Quality Education Data (QED) database and the study sampled from the list of newly found schools. Since the ECLS-K:2011 sample was selected, the creation of the QED file has been transferred from one entity to another. Due to uncertainty as to the quality of the QED and the increased ability to identify Catholic schools over the internet for the ECLS-K:2024, for the ECLS-K:2024 the study identified new non-Catholic private schools via the internet. Web searches were used to identify any additional private schools in the county that were expected to offer kindergarten in the 2023-24 school year.

New schools identified through web searching, including all new public, Catholic, and non-Catholic private schools, were selected separately and with equal probabilities. The measure of size used for selecting both the public and Catholic schools was 25, the minimum desired cluster size of kindergartners. Because there were typically fewer students in non-Catholic private schools, their measure of size was smaller. The minimum desired cluster size used in these cases was the median school size among the non-Catholic schools<sup>19</sup> from the PSS.

### **B.1.2.3 Sampling Children, Parents, School Administrators, and Teachers**

The goal of the sample design is to obtain an approximately self-weighting sample of students, with the exception of API students who need to be oversampled because they do not naturally occur at a rate necessary to meet the sample size goals.<sup>20</sup> Within each sampled school, the study obtained a complete list of kindergartners enrolled, including children in transitional kindergarten and pre-first grade, taking special care to avoid excluding children from the list because of disability or language problems. School staff were given detailed instructions and prompts to ensure that the list included children with disabilities and children for whom English is not their native language.

For the students on a school's student list, two independent sampling strata were formed, one containing API students and the second containing all other students. API students were sampled from the API stratum and the sampling rate was 2.5 times the rate of sampling rate of non-API students. Within each stratum, students were selected using equal probability systematic sampling. Based on an estimated sample of 1,000 participating kindergarten schools, the target number of children sampled at a school would be 21. However, due to the lower than projected estimate of 850 cooperating schools, NCES decided to sample 25 students in each school to ensure approximately 18,060 base year completes. In schools with 29 or fewer students, all students were sampled. In schools with more than 29 eligible students and it was algebraically impossible to oversample API students at the desired rate (2.5 x non-API

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<sup>19</sup> In the ECLS-K:2011 this value was equal to 13.

<sup>20</sup> Although schools with a higher rate of Black students were oversampled, Black students within sampled schools were sampled at the same rate as all other non-API students.

rate), the study sampled all API students and sampled enough non-API students to ensure that the total student sample equaled 25. In schools with more than 29 eligible students where it was algebraically possible to oversample API students at the desired rate, the study did so and sampled a total of 25 students. Twins were not identified prior to sampling, but they may have been in the sample through this method of probability sampling. The parent sample consisted of one parent/guardian for each selected child. Once the sampled kindergarten children were identified, parents were contacted to obtain consent to conduct the child assessment and to ask for completion of the parent survey.

It is possible that in some states and school districts the role of transitional kindergarten and pre-first grade programs has changed since the ECLS-K:2011. When the initial lists of students were obtained from the sampled schools, large deviations from the expected number of kindergarten students were investigated and verified with the schools to ensure that the study had complete coverage of all eligible children and classrooms in the school, including those children in transitional kindergarten and pre-first grade programs.

Additionally, if a school reported a large number of transitional kindergarten or pre-first grade children, further consideration was given as to how to include the school and students in the study. In past ECLS kindergarten cohort collections, transitional kindergarten students were treated as eligible for sampling and this is currently planned for the ECLS-K:2024. However, if it is observed that the rate of transitional kindergarten or pre-first grade students is dramatically different from previous years (e.g., in the prior ECLS collections), the study may consider either subsampling these students at a lower rate or excluding them from the sample.

School administrators in sampled schools will be asked to fill out an administrator-level survey and their data will be linked to students in their school. Primary and special education teachers who teach the sampled children will also be included in the study and will be asked to fill out child- and teacher-level teacher surveys. Primary teachers will be asked to complete surveys in all rounds, while special education teachers will only be asked to complete surveys in the spring rounds. All teacher data will be linked to their students.

#### **B.1.2.4 Census of Kindergarten Teachers**

While a large amount of teacher-level data will be collected as part of the ECLS-K:2024 core study design, the procedures described above are not sufficient to produce a nationally representative sample of kindergarten teachers. National representation would require that each kindergarten teacher in the sampled schools have a non-zero chance of selection for each stage of sample selection. The sampling probabilities for PSUs and schools meet this criterion, but the sampling of teachers does not. Rather, in the core design discussed above in B.1.2.3, the teacher probabilities will depend on the number of sampled children that the teachers teach. If a kindergarten teacher in a sampled school is not the primary teacher for at least one sampled student, under the core design above they have no chance of being included in study.

Thus, to obtain a nationally representative study of kindergarten teachers in the ECLS-K:2024 base kindergarten year, NCES included a census of primary kindergarten teachers in all sampled schools.<sup>21</sup> Conducting a census of all kindergarten teachers in the sampled ECLS-K:2024 schools will produce the nationally representative teacher-level estimates not possible with the core design. By adding the census of kindergarten teachers design to the core design, teacher- and school-level characteristics can be computed from the resulting study data (e.g., percent of teachers with a specific training level or the

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<sup>21</sup> The census of teachers only includes primary, general teachers of kindergarten children. It does not include special education teachers, or other more generalized teachers (e.g., art or gym teachers). A census of teachers will only be obtained at originally-sampled schools. That is, only the primary teachers, and if applicable special education teachers, of sampled children in transfer schools will be asked to complete teacher surveys.

percent of schools with kindergarten teachers who only teach kindergarten).<sup>22</sup> It also will have the advantage of increasing the base year sample of teachers. However, because only a proportion of the kindergarten teachers will have student data attached to them, as the additional sampled teachers will not be linked to an ECLS-K:2024 sampled child, this design will not increase the amount of information obtained for the child component.

### *Sampling Teachers*

As described in section B.2, in the fall of the kindergarten year every kindergarten teacher in the schools sampled for the ECLS-K:2024, irrespective of the presence of sampled students in their class, was asked to complete a teacher-level survey. The survey collected information about the teacher's classroom, teaching methods, views on teaching, professional training, and professional background. Kindergarten teachers who were not linked to sampled students were not asked to complete any child-level teacher surveys. Regardless of whether the teacher was linked to a sampled student or not, they received a \$20 prepaid incentive. (Teachers who were linked to sampled students also received \$7 per child-level survey.) If a responding teacher had at least one sampled child in the classroom, their teacher data was linked to each of their sampled students.

In the spring 2024 kindergarten round, teacher-child linkages made for the fall 2023 data collection will be reviewed and updated as needed. If new kindergarten teachers join the school after the initial list of teachers is obtained, they will be added to the spring kindergarten teacher sample. All kindergarten teachers in the spring 2024 round will again be asked to complete the teacher-level survey; those with sampled students will also be asked to complete the child-level surveys. The incentive amounts will remain the same as in the fall round. The census of teachers is not currently planned for future rounds of the study. That is, in subsequent rounds only teachers of sampled children will be asked to complete surveys.

Collecting teacher-level data from every kindergarten teacher in the sampled schools follows the data collection model used successfully in the ECLS-K. Two sets of analysis weights will be created for teachers. Child-level teacher weights that adjust for teacher nonresponse will be produced to be used for analysis generalizing to the child population. Teacher-level weights will also be produced for analyses generalizing to the kindergarten teacher population.

### *Variance Estimation*

Two alternatives for variance estimation - replicate weights (for variance estimation using replication methods) and stratum and PSU identifiers (for variance estimation using Taylor series approximation) - will be delivered along with the survey data and full sample weights from the data collection for the ECLS-K:2024. There will be one set of replicate weights for every full sample weight computed. In addition, design effects for assessment scores and variables from each survey instrument and median design effects for subgroups will be calculated and provided with the study documentation.

## **B.1.2.5 Subsample for Height and Weight Measurements**

As part of the ECLS-K:2024 child activities, height and weight measurements<sup>23</sup> will be collected for a 30 percent subsample of children in the spring 2024 kindergarten, spring 2025 first-grade, and spring 2027

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<sup>22</sup> In the ECLS-K, a census of kindergarten teachers was taken at each school and those teachers that completed the teacher characteristics section were considered to have a completed teacher questionnaire; this model will also be followed for the ECLS-K:2024. (For the ECLS-K:2011 only the kindergarten teachers of sampled students were surveyed.)

<sup>23</sup> If NCES exercises an optional contract task to conduct vision evaluations with the subsample, this same subsample may be used for the vision evaluations. That is, children who have their height and weight measured would also have their vision evaluation in the spring first-grade and/or spring third-grade round. Additionally, NCES may decide to include vision evaluations for the subsample in the spring 2029 fifth-grade round. If NCES decides to include them, third- and/or fifth-grade subsample vision evaluations will be outlined in future OMB submission request.

third-grade rounds.<sup>24</sup> As was done for the 30 percent subsample used for fall first-grade, fall second-grade, and the hearing data collections in the ECLS-K:2011, each of the self-representing (SR) PSUs were included in the ECLS-K:2024 subsample with certainty. With an expected average of 10 base year schools in each of the 20 SR PSUs and a selection probability of 30 percent, it was anticipated that 60 schools would be selected from SR PSUs. From the 80 non-self-representing (NSR) PSUs, 30 percent, or 24 PSUs, were selected. This was done by first selecting a 60 percent subsample of the 40 NSR strata with equal probability and then selecting one of their two sampled PSUs with equal probability. With an expected average of 10 base year schools in each PSU, it was expected that 240 schools would be selected out of approximately 800 base year schools in all NSR PSUs. In total, 44 of the national study's PSUs were selected for the subsample with 300 schools (30 percent of the national sample size).

The number of PSUs used to select the subsample is an increase from the 30 PSUs in the ECLS-K:2011. This accounts for both the overall increase in the number of PSUs being used for the national ECLS-K:2024 (90 vs. 100), as well as for the additional number of certainty PSUs (10 vs. 20).

Within the subsample of NSR PSUs, all of the corresponding ECLS-K:2024 sampled schools were included with certainty. For the SR PSUs, a 30 percent subsample of the sampled schools within each of the SR PSUs was selected. Among the resulting schools, all sampled children will be included.

Children in the height and weight subsample will have the measurements taken in each applicable round. That is, the sample will be drawn only once and the children in the subsample will have their measurements collected in each applicable round.

#### *Movers in the Schools Subsampled for Height, Weight, and (if Included for a Subsample) Vision*

Children who move—that is, transfer to a new school from their originally-sampled school in the ECLS-K:2024—will be subsampled for follow-up in the data collections that occur after the base year. This procedure will consist of setting “mover follow” flags for child cases coded as base year completes.<sup>25</sup> The flag will have values of one (yes, follow if child moves to another school) or two (no, do not follow if child moves to another school). After the base year, it is expected that 50 percent of the children will have the flag “yes, follow if moved.” Protected groups that are of analytic interest, such as students with an IEP/IFSP, language minority children, or those students in the subsampled PSUs and schools will be followed with certainty regardless of their mover follow flag.

When four or more children transfer from one school to another school (all together), this school will be designated a destination school. This definition of a destination school applies both to schools in the full main sample and to schools in the subsample. Children who move together into a destination school are not considered movers for the purpose of sampling.

The following will be the general approach for handling the children in the subsample that move:

- Children that move from one subsampled school to another subsampled school will continue to be included in the subsample, regardless of their follow flag as they are a protected group.
- Children that move from a subsampled school to a destination school will also continue to be included in the subsample; children attending a destination school are not considered movers.
- Children in the subsample that move to a non-destination school in a sampled PSU (regardless of whether it is in the subsample or not) will be included in the collection of data for both the full

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<sup>24</sup> This submission does not include a request to conduct the national spring 2027 third-grade data collection. A request to conduct that data collection will be included in a future OMB submission, currently planned for August 2026. Additionally, NCES may decide to include the height and weight collections in the spring 2029 fifth-grade round; if so, this work will be outlined as part of a future OMB submission request.

<sup>25</sup> A base year complete is defined as a case with either a completed parent survey and/or child assessment in either one or both of the kindergarten rounds.

sample (e.g., all school, teacher, and parent instruments, and the child assessments) and selected optional task instruments (i.e., height and weight, and vision, if exercised for the subsample).

- Children in the subsample that move to a non-sampled PSU will not be included in the collection of data for school surveys, teacher surveys, child assessments, height and weight, and vision, if exercised for the subsample. Only parent survey data will be collected for these children.
- Children in the subsample that move to a school outside the 50 states or DC will be dropped from the study as the student is out of scope.
- Children that move from a non-sampled school into a sampled school (or a destination school with sampled children) will not become members of the subsample as these children will not have a subsample base weight, given that their base year school was not selected into the subsample.

### *Weighting*

Weights for students that are included in the height and weight (and the vision screening, if applicable) subsample will be created similarly to those created for the complete base year sample. The weights for the subsample of children will take into account the additional 30 percent subsampling of schools among the SR PSUs and the 30 percent subsample of PSUs for the selected NSR schools.

### *Variance Estimation*

Two alternatives for variance estimation - replicate weights (for variance estimation using replication methods) and stratum and PSU identifiers (for variance estimation using Taylor series approximation) - will be delivered along with the survey data and full sample weights from the data collection for the ECLS-K:2024. There will be one set of replicate weights for every full sample weight computed. In addition, design effects for assessment scores and variables from each survey instrument and median design effects for subgroups will be calculated and provided with the study documentation.

## **B.2 Procedures for Collection of Information**

The previous section addressed the statistical methodology for the study, including stratification and sample selection, estimation, and precision requirements. This section describes the national school recruitment procedures (previously approved in OMB 1850-0750 v.25) and procedures for the kindergarten and first-grade data collections, including advance school contact activities and the recruitment of transfer schools.<sup>26</sup>

Included in the text are descriptions of the roles of the field staff who conduct the ECLS-K:2024 study activities. Experienced school recruiters contacted district and school staff to discuss participation in the study, schedule dates for the school visit, discuss parental consent, and collect basic school information. They also recruited transfer districts and schools. Team leaders manage the ECLS-K:2024 teams in the school and serve as the main contact for the schools included in their work area during the data collection periods. They conduct study activities calls with the schools and visit the schools, with their teams of assessors, to conduct assessments and other study activities. These activities are described in detail in the sections below.

### **B.2.1 District and School Recruitment**

This section discusses the district and school recruitment for the ECLS-K:2024 national data collection, which began in August 2022 and will continue through 2023, activities which were previously approved

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<sup>26</sup> Transfer schools are schools to which sampled children move during the life of the study. If these children are flagged to be followed, these transfer schools, and their corresponding districts, will be recruited into the study.

in OMB 1850-0750 v.25.<sup>27</sup> Before school, child, parent, and teacher data collection can occur, the study must secure the cooperation of the selected schools and their districts. The goal of the national recruitment is to recruit 850 schools to participate.

The district and school recruitment materials are contained in Attachment A-2 of OMB 1850-0750 v.25.<sup>28</sup> A study Executive Summary for use with district and school staff during recruitment was also added to Attachment A-1 as part of the April 2023 revision request. During the course of recruitment in the fall of 2022, a few districts requested a brief written summary of the study that could be shared with decision-makers in the district. Letters included in this attachment were printed on the national ECLS-K:2024 study letterhead, which is also included in the attachment. Several of the materials referenced the MyECLS website, which is the portal respondents will use to learn more about the study, provide the study with information, and to launch surveys. When referenced in emails or texts, the MyECLS website link will be hyperlinked. Clicking on the link from the email or text will take the respondents to MyECLS.ed.gov. When the website is referred to in print materials, the entire web address will be used (MyECLS.ed.gov).

**State notification.** In late August 2022, state school superintendents were sent a package via FedEx with signature required. A sticker with the U.S. Department of Education seal and the message, “Important information from the U.S. Department of Education.” was included on the outside of packages. The package included a letter describing the study and an ECLS-K:2024 fact sheet. Any letters supporting the study received from the state were included in all mailings to districts and schools within the state.

**District recruitment.** In early September 2022, public school districts and Catholic dioceses containing schools selected for the ECLS-K:2024 national study were sent a package via FedEx with a signature requirement. A sticker with the U.S. Department of Education seal and the message, “Important information from the U.S. Department of Education.” was included on the outside of packages. The package included a letter describing the study and an ECLS-K:2024 fact sheet. Experienced school recruiters began contacting the districts and dioceses via telephone to obtain permission to contact the schools associated with the district or diocese. In addition, the recruiters obtained information on any special approval processes that each district or diocese requires, such as research applications or district-specific consent forms. Study staff completed necessary research applications. After submission, recruiters followed-up with districts to track the status of application submissions. In some cases, in-person visits by field recruiters or teleconferences with Westat home office and/or NCES staff were necessary to secure district cooperation. If a district chose not to participate, the recruiters attempted refusal conversion, including in-person meetings or transferring the case to another recruiter. All concerns and reasons for refusal were documented.

**School recruitment.** Beginning in mid-September 2022, once district/diocese approval was secured,<sup>29</sup> sampled public and Catholic schools were contacted. (Private non-Catholic schools were contacted in early September 2022 at the beginning of the field period since district/ diocese approval was not required.) Principals at selected public and Catholic schools were sent a package via FedEx with a signature requirement. A sticker with the U.S. Department of Education seal and the message, “Important information from the U.S. Department of Education.” was included on the outside of packages. The package included a letter describing the study and an ECLS-K:2024 fact sheet. The letter displayed the

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<sup>27</sup> Because the target number of schools were not recruited by June 2023, district and school recruitment will continue throughout 2023, and possibly into 2024.

<sup>28</sup> Included in this OMB-cleared attachment are letters and emails for nonresponding districts and schools. Note that there is also text included in the district and school recruitment materials acknowledging the coronavirus pandemic.

<sup>29</sup> Every effort will be made to obtain district permission to contact the sampled schools. This may mean delays in contacting schools as the decision is weighed at the district or applications for special handling districts are completed and reviewed. However, if after a set amount of time (e.g., several months of nonresponse after repeated contact attempts), a district remains nonresponsive, contact with the relevant school(s) in the district will be initiated.

name of the district-level approver, when available. School recruiters contacted the sampled schools via telephone to obtain principal approval for the school’s participation in the study. As needed, in-person visits by field recruiters were conducted to secure school cooperation.

Once approval was obtained, recruiters collected school information to prepare for the fall 2023 school visit, including identifying a school coordinator to serve as the liaison for study activities in the school and determining the following:

- **School visit dates.** The school recruiters discussed the schedule for the fall 2023 data collection with the school principal or school coordinator. When arranging for school visit dates, the recruiter clarified if the kindergarten classes are taught full day or half-day, as well as the start and end time of the school day to determine the number of visit days needed. The dates for the school visit to conduct assessments was set, making sure to avoid conflicts with any special events in the school’s calendar, such as a field trip or school holiday.
- **Assessment locations.** The locations within the school where the assessments will take place were also determined. The goal was to identify locations that provide as little distraction as possible, that protect the privacy of the children, and that are as nondisruptive of the school routine as possible.
- **Consent type.** The recruiter discussed with the school principal or coordinator the type of parental consent that is required, explicit or implicit. If explicit consent was chosen, parents must actively provide their consent. If implicit consent was chosen, consent is assumed unless a parent opts his or her child out of participation. Schools also chose whether to distribute and collect consent forms electronically or on paper. The paper method could be selected for the entire school or for selected parents based on the school’s knowledge of these parents, both in terms of preference and internet access. Additionally, the parent letter will mention the availability of paper consent forms.
- **Other school logistics and information.** In order to facilitate planning for the fall 2023 assessments, the recruiter also collected other school information, for example, enrollment counts, grades taught, and any special instructions.

In order to obtain the target number of cooperating schools, district and school recruitment will continue through the fall of 2023 and possibly into 2024, as needed. Beginning in early spring 2023, substitute districts and schools were identified and released for recruitment, as projections showed this would be necessary to meet study targets. The substitute schools are being recruited using the same methods as the original school sample.

## **B.2.2 Kindergarten and First-Grade National Data Collections**

The ECLS-K:2024 kindergarten and first-grade data collections will include direct child assessments, and parent, school administrator, and teacher (both primary classroom and special education) surveys. The child assessment will be conducted in a one-on-one setting, with trained field staff administering items that will appear on a paper easel.<sup>30</sup> The assessor will read each of the items to the child, as well as any available response options, and the child will respond either orally or by pointing to a response option on the easel. The assessor will then record the child’s response in a laptop. A kindergarten version of the assessment, for use in both the fall and spring kindergarten rounds, and a first-grade version of the assessment, for use in the first-grade round, will be developed.

Initially, school staff respondents will be encouraged to complete the surveys on the web; paper versions will be distributed later in the field periods to non-responders. Parent surveys will also be available on the web. Field staff will contact parent web non-responders to complete the survey via the phone or in rare

<sup>30</sup> If needed due to the coronavirus pandemic, personal protective equipment (PPE), such as face masks, will be used during the administration of the assessment.



cases, during an in-person visit. In cases where nonresponse follow-up is required, the team leaders will work with the school coordinators to obtain parent contact information for parents who have not provided contact information on the MyECLS website. The team leader will assign parent cases to himself or herself and to assessors on the team. The assigned field staff member will contact the parent, and if the parent is agreeable, complete the web survey with the parent over the phone or in-person. That is, the field staff will access the web survey and ask the questions from the website, entering the responses into the survey directly.

Lower than desired response rates for the parent surveys in the 2022 kindergarten-first grade (K-1) field test indicated the need to follow-up with parents and to complete the survey over the phone earlier in the national data collection field period. Additionally, approximately 20 field staff who are dedicated solely to administering the parent surveys (unlike other field staff who will have other duties, such as administering the child assessment) were hired. This will allow other field staff to focus on in-school data collection during particularly busy periods of school visits. When visits are not scheduled, these field staff will also contact parents to complete surveys over the telephone or in-person as needed.

Links to access the assigned survey(s) will appear in the study website, MyECLS, so as to be transparent for the respondent. Table B-2 displays an overview of what various surveys and child assessment activities will occur in the national kindergarten and first-grade rounds.

Table B-2. National kindergarten and first-grade instruments, by available mode and round

Instrument	Available Mode <sup>1</sup>	National Round
Parent survey	Web Telephone and in-person for non-responders	Fall kindergarten Spring kindergarten Spring first grade
Primary teacher teacher-level and child-level surveys	Web Paper upon request and for non-responders	Fall kindergarten Spring kindergarten Spring first grade
Special education teacher teacher-level and child-level surveys	Web Paper upon request and for non-responders	Spring kindergarten Spring first grade
School administrator survey	Web Paper upon request and for non-responders	Spring kindergarten Spring first grade
Child assessment	Paper easel with assessor inputting child responses electronically	Fall kindergarten Spring kindergarten Spring first grade

NOTE: If a child is sampled and is later determined to be ineligible for the assessment, the parents, teachers, and school administrators will still be asked to complete surveys.

<sup>1</sup>As noted in Part A of this revision request, abbreviated paper versions of parent surveys are being considered for the spring kindergarten round and beyond, in order to boost response rates among non-responders. Once a decision is made, the table will be updated if needed, as part of a future revision request.

All in-person contacts for the study will be in line with the study’s COVID protocols. For example, the field staff will sanitize study equipment and materials before and after each child session, as needed. Staff will also comply with requirements from federal, state, and local agencies and Westat (the organization partnered with the U.S. Department of Education to collect the study data) about the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing. Field staff will also be required to follow any school-specific

COVID safety precautions as well (for example, temperature checks). When deemed useful (e.g., given the current prevalence of COVID in selected communities), the study’s COVID protocols fact sheet (see Attachment A-1) will be shared with selected schools and districts to provide additional details on the ECLS COVID protocols.

At the conclusion of each data collection round, study respondents (school coordinators, teachers, school administrators, and parents) will be sent a thank you letter or email.<sup>31</sup> After the spring kindergarten and spring first-grade rounds, school staff will receive a Certificate of Contribution, recognizing their efforts in aid of a U.S. Department of Education study.<sup>32</sup> Schools will also be sent their \$300/\$250 check plus choice of non-monetary incentive in recognition of their time and efforts.<sup>33</sup> Part A of this submission contains further details about the incentives planned for the kindergarten and first-grade rounds of the study.

In order to maintain parent engagement in the study, children will be sent ECLS-K:2024 birthday cards shortly before their birthday.<sup>34</sup> The card serves as a subtle reminder of the ECLS-K:2024 for the parents and children throughout the life of the study, especially important between the spring kindergarten and spring first-grade rounds, when a year will lapse between assessments. These type of cards were also used in the previous ECLS cohorts and were very well received by the children and parents alike.

Attachment A-1 and A-2 contain the respondent materials that will be utilized throughout the kindergarten and first-grade data collection rounds. Attachment A-3 contains the script for a respondent video that appears on the MyECLS website; A-4 contains study informational PowerPoint slide decks for teachers and parents; A-5 contains infographics created from findings from previous ECLS cohorts, as well as other U.S. Department of Education studies; and A-6 contains the script for the student experience video that appears on the MyECLS landing page as described in Attachment F. The kindergarten and first-grade data collection instruments appear in full in Attachments B-E.<sup>35</sup> Attachment F contains details about the MyECLS respondent website; Attachment G contains a matrix summarizing the study items; and Attachment H contains a summary of changes to the kindergarten surveys.

### **B.2.2.1 Fall 2023 Kindergarten Study Activities**

#### *Advance school contacts*

The first round of kindergarten study activities began in the summer of 2023, with advance school visit contacts to re-establish contact with the schools after the recruitment period, conduct student sampling, and make study activities telephone calls to finalize school visit logistics. The school visits then occurred from September through December 2023.

In July 2023, school coordinators were sent an email reminding them of the study and the upcoming tasks. Then, in August 2023, school coordinators in participating schools were emailed instructions for providing information on the participating children and accessing the MyECLS website to record child,

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<sup>31</sup> As noted in Part A, NCES is considering the use of an end-of-round thank-you letter from the Secretary of Education for school administrators, school staff, and parents. If the letter is approved, it will be included in a future revision request.

<sup>32</sup> The Certificate of Contribution will not reference the study name so as not to identify study respondents. It will contain the U.S. Department of Education logo and will be signed by the NCES Commissioner.

<sup>33</sup> As noted in Part A of this submission, schools may choose to receive \$300, or \$250 plus either a subscription to a children’s magazine or three attendance places in a professional development webinar. For schools that choose the mix of monetary and non-monetary incentives, the non-monetary incentives will also be provided at the conclusion of the round. Originally sampled schools and destination schools—schools with four or more transfer children—will receive the school incentive in recognition of the study burden. Schools to which less than four children transfer will not receive this incentive, as their burden is considerably less.

<sup>34</sup> Birthday cards will only be sent to children whose schools provided parental mailing addresses.

<sup>35</sup> The spring first-grade survey items will continue to be revised, based on results from the fall 2022 field test, further discussions with study designers, and programming work. Additionally, Spanish versions of the spring first-grade parent survey will be developed once the English version of this survey is finalized. These changes, and the Spanish version, will be included in the April 2024 OMB revision requests that includes a 30D review period.

parent, and teacher information. A unique PIN to access the MyECLS website was also sent in a separate email to each school coordinator. Upon logging on to the website using the PIN, the school coordinators were asked to provide their email address and a password that will be used upon subsequent visits to the website. The MyECLS screens that are used in the kindergarten and first-grade rounds appear in Attachment F. The school coordinator was asked to upload a list of all kindergartners, from all kindergarten classes in the school, including transitional kindergarten and pre-first classrooms. They were instructed to include all kindergartners, regardless of what language they speak or any IEPs (or equivalents) in place. For each child, the list included the child's first, middle, and last name; the child's month and year of birth; the child's grade; and the child's sex.<sup>36</sup> Also, for sampling reasons, the school coordinator was asked to identify children who are Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander. The study made accommodations for schools that did not wish to provide child names at the time of sampling, for example using a numbering system in place of child names.

Study staff received notification when the child list was uploaded. The lists were checked for formatting and accuracy and then children were sampled. Approximately 25 children in each of the participating schools were randomly sampled.<sup>37</sup> Once the child sample was selected, the school coordinators were instructed to access the MyECLS website, download the list of participating children, review it for accuracy, and gather child information (such as teachers or needed accommodations) to provide to the team leader during the study activities call.

For the study activities call,<sup>38</sup> which were scheduled during the school recruitment activities, team leaders contacted the school coordinators to review the school coordinator role and to address any questions that they may have.<sup>39</sup> A checklist of the tasks to be completed, available on the MyECLS website, guided the study activities call. Team leaders discussed the logistics of the fall 2023 school visit, confirming or updating school information gathered during the school recruitment round, such as the assessment dates and assessment location. Child-specific information about race and ethnicity, teachers, and accommodations was also collected, and data provided at the time of child sampling was also confirmed. Team leaders recorded updates in the MyECLS website.

After the study activities call, the school coordinator was asked to email teachers and parents to alert them to the school's participation in the study and to inform them that hard-copy informational study materials would be distributed. The school coordinator was sent a study activities package, containing a welcome letter with instructions for notifying school staff and parents about the ECLS-K:2024, a \$65 incentive check, and tips for encouraging respondent participation. In the package were individual packets for the kindergarten teachers and parents for distribution by the school coordinator. The school coordinator, teacher, and parent packets were all labeled with a sticker with the U.S. Department of Education seal and the message, "Important information from the U.S. Department of Education." on the outside of the envelope. Team leaders were provided with blank notecards to use for follow-up correspondence with the school coordinator or other respondents, as needed. The cover of the notecard was green with various school-related graphics, similar to those that appear on the MyECLS website. The majority of the advance school contact activities took place in late summer or early fall 2023.

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<sup>36</sup> IEP information might be deemed too sensitive for the school to be willing to provide it on the child list used for sampling. Therefore, IEP information for sampled children was collected during the study activities call. Additionally, the study was advised that school records typically have child "sex" listed, although the ECLS-K:2024 will allow for child sex information to be missing at the time of sampling. The study's parent surveys will collect the genders of parent figures and the child, including an "another gender" category.

<sup>37</sup> As noted in section B.1.2.3., all kindergartners were sampled in schools with 29 or fewer students.

<sup>38</sup> School visits were conducted if the school coordinator preferred to meet with the team leader in-person to discuss the study logistics and provide school- and child-level information.

<sup>39</sup> If needed due to the coronavirus pandemic, the team leader also discussed safety precautions to be implemented for the school visit. The study staff were trained to follow the latest safety measures in place by the study as well as additional safety precautions required by the district and/or school.

As a study incentive and a method for driving study engagement, participating teachers and school administrators received a newsletter that highlights study and other educational news and research. The newsletter was e-mailed to participating school staff, beginning in the fall of 2023. Additional editions of the school staff newsletter are planned for distribution to school staff in February, March, May, and October 2024, and then again annually in those months through the end of the study. Because the distribution of the school staff' newsletters was via email, they were sent to school administrators and teachers in the fall of 2023 once their email addresses were obtained from the schools. In later rounds, the school administrator will be encouraged to distribute the electronic newsletter to all school staff. Parents will be sent a printed newsletter approximately once a round, beginning in fall 2023 for the kindergarten year, including in years where data collection does not occur (e.g., when the sampled children are in second grade). School coordinators will be sent the printed newsletters and asked to place them in the sampled children's backpacks, so they can be taken home to their parent.

Parent consent. During the study activities call, the team leaders confirmed the school's requirements for obtaining parent consent that were identified during the recruitment period: that is, whether the school requires explicit consent from each child's parent, or if the school will notify parents and consider consent to be implicit unless the parent refuses. The team leader asked whether the school planned to collect consent forms electronically or via hard-copy forms and whether the school coordinator would distribute the parent packets or would like the team leader's help doing so. They also discussed if Spanish or Mandarin parent letters and consent forms were needed. Study staff prepared parent packets containing a letter describing the study, asking the parents to allow their child's participation and inviting them to complete a parent survey, with instructions for accessing the MyECLS website. The parent packet also included the ECLS-K:2024 parent fact sheet, a prepaid Mastercard® worth \$15, and a children's book.<sup>40</sup> The prepaid card had text stating, "Thank you!" and did not contain the study name.<sup>41</sup> Also included in the packet was a sealed postcard with a unique PIN to be used by parents when accessing the MyECLS website for the first time they access the website in each data collection period. Upon logging on to the website using the PIN, the parents were asked to provide their email address and a password that will be used upon subsequent visits to the website. All printed parent communication materials was available in both English and Spanish. The consent materials were also translated into Mandarin. These translated materials were included in the mailing alongside the English materials if the school indicated they are needed. For schools in which hard-copy consent were used, a consent form was included in the parent packet. If the school preferred that the team leader distribute the parent packets, the team leader asked the school coordinator to provide parent contact information. School coordinators were provided with email and text message<sup>42</sup> templates to send to nonresponding parents (see Attachment A-1).<sup>43</sup>

For schools that required implicit consent only, the children's consent status was set to obtained and remained as such unless the parent actively refused participation. For schools that required explicit consent, the consent status was initially set to pending. For schools and parents who chose electronic consent, the MyECLS website updated the consent status to obtained or refused as the parents recorded

<sup>40</sup> In the fall kindergarten round, schools were given a choice of three titles and asked to indicate which book they would prefer the sampled parents receive in their parent welcome packets. The selected book will then be included in the parent welcome packets, at the start of the fall and spring kindergarten-rounds, and the spring first-grade round. Parents will be informed that the title was chosen by their school and that if they do not wish to keep the book, they can donate it to the school's library.

<sup>41</sup> The envelope containing the Mastercard® included a sticker with text stating "To activate the enclosed Mastercard®, please visit the study website and enter your unique PIN from the sealed postcard included in this packet. The card will be ready for use approximately 24 hours after the PIN is entered. Completion of the parent survey is not required to activate or use the card." This text was also available in Spanish and Mandarin.

<sup>42</sup> Because school coordinators reported in the 2022 K-1 field test that text message survey reminders were rarely used, text message templates were only available upon coordinator request in the national data collection rounds.

<sup>43</sup> As study procedures evolve, the respondent materials will be updated. As well, the Spanish and Mandarin translations of parent materials will be developed. This October 2023 revision request contains updates primarily on spring kindergarten respondent materials. Revisions to the spring first-grade materials will be included in an April 2024 OMB revision request that include a 30D review period. (Translated fall and spring kindergarten materials are included in the package as of April 2023.)

their preference on the MyECLS website. For schools and parents who chose hard-copy consent, the school coordinators or team leaders updated the consent status on the MyECLS website as consent forms were received. Regardless of the consent type and delivery method selected, the school coordinator and team leader monitored the consent status, the goal being to obtain consent for all sampled children prior to the ECLS-K:2024 school visit. The team leader offered to help follow up with parents; again, if follow-up was needed, the team leader asked the school coordinator to provide contact information for the parents. If the school coordinator handled the parent contact, the team leader asked him or her to update the MyECLS website with children’s consent status. Otherwise, as necessary, the team leader updated the consent status. For schools that required explicit consent, to encourage the return of consent forms, schools were offered a food event (e.g., pizza party or movie night) if all consent forms were returned, regardless of whether consent was obtained for all children. Only children with obtained parental consent participated in the study activities.

*Child and teacher information.* As described above, during the study activities call the team leaders also asked the school coordinators to provide information for the selected children, including the presence of an IEP, required testing accommodations, and primary language spoken at home. The team leaders also asked the school coordinators to provide information on the children’s primary classroom teachers, as well as other kindergarten teachers in the school who did not teach sampled children in their classroom. Team leaders recorded this information in the MyECLS website, where the school coordinator could view the information and communicate any changes to the team leader via telephone or via secure message on the MyECLS website. The secure messaging system allowed the school and study staff to communicate information about the participating children. In use for the last three rounds of the ECLS-K:2011 and the fall 2022 ECLS K-1 field test, the Secure Messaging system allows field staff and schools to communicate personally identifiable information (PII) electronically via a secure system, instead of through non-secure email messages or over the telephone.

Throughout these study activities, positive and cooperative working relationships with school personnel and the school community were maintained.

#### *Direct child assessment*

The fall 2023 kindergarten direct cognitive assessment contained a language screener and age- and grade-appropriate reading and mathematics items that appeared on printed easels, as well as an oral executive function task to assess working memory. The assessment was administered directly to the sampled children during a one-on-one session with a trained assessor or team leader.<sup>44</sup> The front of the printed easel displayed to the child the question text, any response options, and any associated images. The back of the easel, as well as the assessors’ laptops, displayed the question text, any response options, and any appropriate gesturing instructions for the assessor to use when administering the item. Assessors read each item to the child and recorded children’s responses into their laptop.

Assessors began the assessment with the administration of a language screener to determine if the child was fluent enough in English to complete the English-language version of the cognitive assessment. The first task in the language screener asked children to follow simple, direct instructions given by the assessor in English, such as “point to the floor.” The second task asked children to give the name of a pictured object displayed on the easel, which tests children’s expressive vocabulary. Children who spoke enough English to pass the language screener continued to the English reading and mathematics cognitive assessments, followed by the English executive function task. Children who did not pass the language screener and who—according to the school coordinator—spoke Spanish were administered the English Basic Reading Skills (EBRS) items and Spanish mathematics assessment, followed by the Spanish

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<sup>44</sup> Team leaders and assessors are all trained to conduct all child assessment tasks. Where “assessor” is used in discussing the field work, team leaders will also be conducting this work.

executive function task. If a child did not pass the language screener and spoke a language other than Spanish, the child completed the EBRs items, after which the assessment concluded.

The structure of the ECLS-K:2024 reading and mathematics assessments were two-stage, the same model used in the ECLS-K and ECLS-K:2011 assessments. All children first were administered a routing test. Performance on the routing test determined which one of three second-stage tests (low, middle, or high difficulty) was appropriate for the child's demonstrated skill level; the child was then administered the appropriate second-stage assessment form. Though new items were developed for inclusion in the kindergarten ECLS-K:2024 reading and mathematics assessments and were tested in the fall 2022 ECLS K-1 field test, some items in the assessments were the same as those included in the assessments from the ECLS-K:2011 and the ECLS-K assessments. These items were included in order to enable researchers to conduct cross-cohort analyses using the assessment data.

After completing the reading and mathematics items, the assessor then administered the executive function task. This task assessed the child's working memory using a backwards digit span task.

At the conclusion of the cognitive assessment, the assessor completed the study's Assessor Observation Scale in order to rate the child's behavior, including attention span, persistence, and attendance to the cognitive tasks.

To the greatest extent possible, accommodations were provided to children who needed them to participate in the ECLS-K:2024. As previously mentioned, team leaders worked with school coordinators to determine any accommodations that were needed to be provided. Possible accommodations included, but were not limited to, scheduling the assessment at a particular time of day, conducting the assessment in a particular setting, using an assistive device, and having an aide present during the child's assessment session. Children who were excluded from standardized assessments, or who were required sign language, braille, or large print text,<sup>45</sup> were not able to be accommodated by the ECLS-K:2024 assessment. While these students were excluded from the direct child assessment, they were still eligible for the study, with their parents, teachers, and school administrators still asked to complete the web surveys.

Typically, the ECLS-K:2024 school visit took between 2 to 3 days in each school. The number of days for the visit depended on several factors, such as restrictions on the assessment schedule (e.g., if assessments could be conducted only in the morning) and the amount of space available for simultaneous one-on-one assessments. The length of the school visit was determined with the school coordinator during the study activities call. Generally, the ECLS-K:2024 team that visited the school included the team leader and two to three assessors, though sometimes an additional assessor or two participated in a school visit when a larger number of children needed to be assessed in a shorter time frame due to the school calendar. There was one team per work area (which loosely corresponded to a selected county). The ECLS-K:2024 team arrived at the school on the appointed first day of assessments and, following any of the school's required check-in procedures, immediately contacted the school coordinator. The team leader introduced the assessors to the school coordinator. The procedures to be used during the on-site data collection period, including any necessary COVID-19 safety measures, were discussed with the school coordinator to ensure there was a common understanding of those procedures. The team leader also confirmed that all sampled children were still enrolled in the school as of the school visit and determined which children were present at school that day.

On each day of the school visit, the team leader and assessors were taken by school personnel to the assessment area(s), where they removed potential distractions as much as possible and established a comfortable environment for conducting the assessments. In some cases, several assessors worked

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<sup>45</sup> NCES is currently investigating whether screen reading technology may enable the study to include in the direct assessment activities children who otherwise would be excluded due to the need for large print text. If the study ends up able to support the inclusion of these students, then they will be included.

together in the same space; in other schools, the school had different areas for each assessor. The study staff worked with the school to minimize disruptions to the schools' physical space. The study staff set up the assessment materials: easels, assessor laptops, and necessary forms. The team leader printed the school visit materials (Child Information Sheet and Sign-out Sheets) they were used to select the children for assessment. The Child Information Sheet contained a list of the sampled children, their teacher information, and any details on needed accommodations. The sheet was kept in a secure, central location for assessors to check off children they planned to assess so that the child was not taken by another assessor. If the school wished to use them, Sign-Out Sheets were given to teachers of sampled children. Assessors signed in and out the children they assessed so that teachers and other school staff could find the children in the assessment location as needed. These forms were all stored at the school in the school coordinator's care at the end of each day and were destroyed by the school coordinator at the conclusion of the field period.

Once the assessment areas were set up and assessors were ready to begin work, the school coordinator introduced the ECLS-K:2024 team members to the teachers whose children were assessed. The study staff worked with teachers to be sure children did not miss important classroom activities, recess, or lunch. The teachers, in turn, introduced the assessors to the class. Assessors then escorted the sampled children to the assessment areas, one-by-one, as each child and their assessor was ready for the assessment. When walking to the assessment space, the study staff worked to build rapport with the children to ensure they were comfortable before beginning the assessment. Study staff continued to monitor the children's moods during the study activities. Children were able to take breaks from the assessment as needed. The assessment could also be conducted over multiple sessions to accommodate classroom activities.

When the assessor and study child arrived at the assessment space, the assessor introduced the child to the task and began the cognitive assessments. After completing the cognitive assessments, the child was returned to the classroom and the next sampled child was taken to the assessment area and assessed. At the end of each day, the team leader updated the children's assessment status in the MyECLS website and the team returned the assessment locations to their original state. Any paper forms, such as the sign-out sheets, that were used on subsequent days of the school visit were left with the school coordinator for safekeeping to ensure PII did not leave the school. At the end of the school visit, any forms with PII were left with the school coordinator, who was asked to destroy them at the end of the field period.

It was expected that some children would be absent from school when the assessments are scheduled. Certain days throughout the field period were designated as days on which some field staff conducted make-up assessments. If necessary, make-up assessments were scheduled for later in December 2023.

#### *Teacher surveys*

During the study activities calls, the team leaders asked the school coordinators to provide the name and contact information for the primary teachers of the selected children. If a child had more than one primary classroom teacher, the team leader asked the school coordinator to identify the teacher with whom the child spends the most time. The team leader then recorded the teacher information in the MyECLS website and linked the sampled children to their teachers. This linking system was first developed and used successfully for the ECLS-K and ECLS-K:2011 data collections, and was also used for the fall 2022 ECLS K-1 field test. Information about kindergarten teachers who do not teach selected children was also collected as they are part of the study's census of kindergarten teachers.

Once teacher information was recorded, study staff assembled teacher packets and sent them to the school coordinator to distribute to the appropriate kindergarten teachers. The teacher packets contained a letter describing the ECLS-K:2024 and instructions for accessing the MyECLS website to complete the

surveys, an ECLS-K:2024 teacher fact sheet, and an incentive check.<sup>46</sup> Teachers were emailed their unique PIN needed to access the MyECLS website for the first time they access the website in each data collection period. Upon logging on to the website using the PIN, the teachers were asked to provide their email address and a password that was used upon subsequent visits to the website.

Primary classroom teachers of sampled kindergarten children were asked to complete two types of self-administered web surveys. The teacher-level survey included questions about the teachers' background and education, curriculum, and instructional practices, including their views on the school climate and their evaluation methods used for reporting to parents. The second type of teacher survey was a child-level survey with questions that asked the teacher to rate the sampled child identified in the survey on academic and social skills, school engagement, and classroom behaviors. The survey also contained questions on instruction and grading practices, behavioral issues, and homework assignments. In order to obtain a census of teachers, kindergarten teachers who do not teach sampled children were asked to complete the teacher-level survey only.

Each teacher linked to a sampled child was given \$20 for the teacher-level survey plus \$7 for each child-level survey they were asked to complete. The average number of children per teacher was expected to be about seven, so each teacher received an average of \$69. Kindergarten teachers who do not teach sampled students were given a \$20 check with the request for their completion of the teacher-level survey. The kindergarten teachers were also emailed a newsletter containing study and other educational information.

The school coordinator and team leader for each school monitored the completion of the teacher web surveys on the MyECLS website and prompted staff to complete them. School coordinators were asked to follow-up with teachers throughout the course of the field period to remind them to complete their surveys. Email templates for this purpose were provided to the coordinator from the team leader. If the school coordinator preferred that the team leader follow-up with teachers, the team leader sent the emails to nonresponding teachers. These email templates, along with instructions for using them and tips for the school coordinator to encourage teacher participation, appear in Attachment A-1.

Paper surveys were provided to teachers upon request, as well as to non-responders. Team leaders also prompted for the teacher surveys during the on-site school visit. On the first day of the school visit, the team leader reminded the school coordinator of the need for teachers to complete the surveys, d paper surveys as necessary, and collected paper surveys as they are completed. If any surveys still were not completed by the end of the school visit, the team leader asked for a specific date from the school coordinator by which the surveys would be completed. The team leader then visited the school at that later date to collect the remaining surveys and returned them to the home office via FedEx. The number of follow-up attempts conducted depended on teacher response.

#### *Parent survey*

Parents of all sampled children were asked to complete a self-administered web survey on the MyECLS website. Instructions for accessing the MyECLS website to complete the web parent survey was included with the parent packets distributed by the school coordinator. Also in this packet was a postcard with a unique PIN needed to access the MyECLS website for the first time. Upon logging on to the website using the PIN, parents were asked to provide their email address and a password that was used upon subsequent visits to the website. In the packet, parents also received a children's book as well as a monetary incentive of \$15 in the form of a prepaid Mastercard®. Parents were also given a printed study newsletter, placed in their children's backpacks by the school coordinator.

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<sup>46</sup> If district policy prevents school staff from receiving an incentive, these incentives were not be provided. School recruiters noted this district policy at the time of recruitment.



The ECLS-K:2024 made every effort to include non-English speaking parents in the study. All written parent materials, such as the fact sheet and letters, were available in Spanish. The parent welcome letter and consent materials were also available in Mandarin. The MyECLS website had a toggle that allowed parents to view the website in Spanish and the online parent survey was also available in Spanish. For parents that speak a language other than English or Spanish, interpreters were used along with ECLS study staff to complete the surveys via phone or, in rare cases, in person. If a family member over the age of 16 was available to translate, the assessor conducting the survey asked the family member to translate each question after it was read by the assessor and then translated the parent's response to English so the assessor could record it in the survey. If a family member was not available to serve as an interpreter, the assessor worked with the team leader to contact a professional interpreter to attend the interview.<sup>47</sup> At the beginning of the telephone call to complete the parent survey, the assessor introduced the interpreter to the parent and then proceeded with the survey questions.

School coordinators were asked to follow-up with parents throughout the course of the field period to remind them to provide consent (in schools requiring explicit consent) and to complete their surveys. Nonresponse reminder email templates were provided to school coordinators by the team leaders.<sup>48</sup> If the school coordinator preferred that the team leader follow-up with parents, the team leader collected contact information to send the materials to nonresponding parents by email. These templates, along with instructions for using them and tips for the school coordinator to encourage parent participation, appear in Attachment A-1.

For parents who did not complete the survey on their own, the ECLS-K:2024 field staff who conduct the child assessments were also trained to conduct surveys with parents using the web survey instrument on the MyECLS website. The team leader assigned the nonresponding parent survey cases to assessors. Initial calls to parents served to remind parents to log on to the website to activate their \$15 Mastercard®, provide consent (if in a school requiring explicit consent and still missing), and to complete the survey. Assessors also answered any questions and assisted parents with logging on to the website as needed. As the field period progressed, assessors were assigned parent survey cases to complete via telephone. In these cases, procedures for conducting the surveys at times that were most convenient for parents and that allow sufficient flexibility were used. To establish contact with a parent of a sampled child, field staff were trained to place calls during weekdays, evenings, and weekends. If the initial assessor was unable to make contact and complete the survey, the cases was assigned to different assessors to attempt to complete the survey. Sometimes having a different assessor call from a different phone number had a positive effect on completion. During the last few weeks of data collection, cases that had not yet been contacted or completed were attempted as in-person surveys by local assessors.

### **B.2.2.2 Spring 2024 Kindergarten Study Activities**

#### *Advance school contact*

The second round of kindergarten study activities will begin in early 2024, when school coordinators will be sent an email reminding them of the spring 2024 visit and asking them to reserve space for the study activities. A small number of schools are expected to be recruited too late in the fall 2023 kindergarten round to participate and thus will begin their participation in the spring 2024 round. The contact materials for these school coordinators will focus on introducing them to the study before discussing the spring 2024 visit. Depending on when the school was recruited, student sampling activities will also occur. All school coordinators will be provided with a new, unique PIN to access the MyECLS website.

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<sup>47</sup> Professional interpreters were hired by Westat and were required to obtain the same security requirements as the other ECLS-K:2024 field staff.

<sup>48</sup> Text message survey reminder templates were available upon school coordinator request.

In early spring 2024, school coordinators will be asked to review the child and teacher information contained on the MyECLS website and to note any changes to that information to be conveyed to the team leader in the upcoming study activities call. Of particular importance for the coordinator to note will be children who may have transferred to a new school since the fall 2023 study visit. The school coordinator will be asked to notify school staff and parents of the upcoming study tasks. The home office will mail the school coordinator study packets to be distributed to teachers and the school administrator, as well as for parents to be sent home in children's backpacks. The mailing will also contain a letter for the school coordinator with instructions for distributing the respondent packets and encouraging participation, as well as a \$35 incentive check<sup>49</sup>, if permitted by district and school policy.

Team leaders will then conduct study activities calls in March and April 2024. As in the fall 2023 round, they will review and update school, child, and teacher information, ask for details about any schools to which the sampled children moved, confirm the dates of the study visit, and ask the school coordinator to reserve space for the study activities. They will also ask the school coordinator to confirm the special education teachers or related services provider for sampled children with an IEP. Team leaders will record any updated information in the MyECLS website. Missing parental consent will also be discussed, as these parents will again be asked to provide consent for their children's participation with the goal of obtaining completed spring 2024 assessments for children who did not participate in the fall 2023 round due to missing parental consent. Parental consent will also be collected from all parents in schools that did not participate in the fall round.

Transfer school recruitment. If a school coordinator informs the team leader that a child has moved to a new school, the school coordinator will be asked to provide the child's new school information. As field staff learn of children who have left their original school to attend a different school, the new district (if new to the ECLS-K:2024) and school will be recruited into the study using the same procedures described above for districts and schools in the original sample. If a transfer school is in a district that is already participating, that district will be notified that a new school in their district will now be asked to participate in the study, and the new school will be recruited. If the child transfers to a school that is already participating in the study, that school will be notified that a new student in the study is now in their school. All recruitment and notification mailings will be labeled with a sticker with the U.S. Department of Education seal and the message, "Important information from the U.S. Department of Education." on the outside of the envelope. Attachment A-1 contains the letters that will be used to recruit the new districts and schools.

Upon learning of children who move schools, team leaders will notify the home office so that the appropriate mailings can be sent. Each district that is new to the study will be sent a letter describing the study and an ECLS-K:2024 fact sheet, along with the name of the school(s) to which study children have transferred. School recruiters will follow-up the mailing with a telephone call to gain the district's cooperation. Once that is received, the transfer school(s) will be contacted for recruitment. Schools that are new to the study will receive a letter describing the study and an ECLS-K:2024 fact sheet. As noted above, if a study child moves to a new school in a district that is already participating in the study, the district will be notified in a mailing. The new school will then receive a mailing and will be contacted for recruitment. In all cases, every effort will be made to complete the cognitive assessment and all other study activities at the transfer school. When a new district or school declines to participate, refusal conversion efforts will be attempted. If a final refusal is received, team leaders will contact parents of the transfer students to discuss assessing the children in their homes or another neutral location, such as a public library.

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<sup>49</sup> School coordinators in schools that were recruited too late to participate in the fall kindergarten round will receive a \$65 incentive check. This amount is comparable to the amount school coordinators received in fall 2023 to recognize their efforts with student sampling and providing school- and teacher-level data.

Sample Tracking. Just as information about transfer schools will be collected in order to assess mover children in their new schools, collecting current contact information for parents/guardians will also be a focus during the advance school contact period. Trained tracing specialists will be employed to locate families that move without providing updated contact information to the school or on the MyECLS website. Contact information for parents of some sampled children will be out of date, especially for families of children who move frequently. These tracing specialists will actively pursue locating information through school sources, local directories, and directory assistance. They may also employ services such as National Change of Address (NCOA) directories available from the U.S. Postal Service in order to improve the rate of locating parents.

#### *Direct child assessment and other child activities*

The same cognitive child assessment as used in the fall 2023 kindergarten round will be used again in the spring 2024 round. That is, the same reading and mathematics items will again be administered using a paper easel with the assessors recording responses into their laptops. The executive function task will again follow the cognitive items. The assessment will again include a language screener to ensure the child is able to complete the English assessment. Children who speak enough English to pass the language screener will continue to the English reading and mathematics cognitive assessments, followed by the English executive function task. Children who do not pass the language screener and who speak Spanish will be administered the EBRS items and Spanish mathematics assessment, followed by the Spanish executive function task. If a child does not pass the language screener and speaks a language other than Spanish, the child will complete the EBRS items only.

The spring 2024 study activities will also include height and weight measurements in select schools. As described in section B.1.2.5, the schools in the subsampled PSUs will be selected to participate in this component of the study activities. Participating children in these school will have their height and weight measured, regardless of their language. To conduct the height and weight measurements for the ECLS-K:2024, assessors will use portable stadiometers called Shorr Boards® to measure height, while digital scales will be used for the weight measurement. The same type of equipment was used in the ECLS-K:2011 study.

During the study activities call with schools prior to each spring school visit, team leaders will discuss with the schools the best place to set up the equipment, noting that a quiet, private area in or near the assessment space is best. Ideally the space will be non-carpeted, to ensure the most accurate reading on the scale. Upon arrival at the school each morning, the team will set up the measurement station as part of their preparation for the child activities. The equipment will then be disassembled and removed from the school at the conclusion of each day.

The height and weight measurements will be collected by assessors, after the administration of the cognitive child assessment, just prior to returning the child to his or her classroom. Assessors will follow scripted instructions to introduce the task and to conduct each of the measurements. Before measuring the child, the assessor will ask the child to remove his/her shoes and any outerwear or hats. Children will be asked to stand on the foot piece of the Shorr Board®, with his/her feet flat and together, and with toes pointed slightly outward at a 60-degree angle. The child will be asked to look straight ahead and take a deep breath as the assessor lowers the head piece gently down to the top of the child's head, noting the measurement. The assessor will then ask the child to step on the scale so that the weight measurement can be recorded. The measurements will then be repeated to ensure accuracy. Assessors will enter the measurements directly into their laptop. The data entry program will compare the two height measurements against each other, as well as the weight measurements against each other. If the height measurements are off by one inch or more, or the weight measurements are off by 1 kilogram or more, the

assessor will be instructed to collect an additional height (or weight) measurement. Alcohol wipes will be provided for cleaning the head piece of the Shorr Board® and the scale after each child’s measurement.

Children with physical challenges (e.g., wheelchair bound) will not have their height and weight measured. Children with complicated hairstyles or religious coverings that would make the height measurement inaccurate will only have their weight measured. Any child can refuse to have either or both of the measurements taken.

As in the fall 2023 round, on school visit days team leaders and assessors will meet the school coordinators at the schools, set up the assessment space, and meet the teachers. They will discuss the classroom schedules with teachers so that children do not miss important activities, recess, or lunch while being assessed. Study staff will use the Child Information Sheet to manage the flow of assessments, being sure to only assess children who have parental consent. Sign Out Sheets will be used to record the children’s whereabouts during the assessments. The study staff will greet children at their classrooms, walk them to the assessment space while building rapport, and introduce them to the study activities. Administration of the language screener, followed by the cognitive assessment, executive function task, and height and weight measurements (if applicable) will occur. Breaks in the assessment will be taken as needed by the child or to accommodate classroom activities. Study staff will then return each child to his or her classroom before greeting another child for the next assessment. Prior to or after returning children to their classrooms, assessors will complete the study’s Assessor Observation Form, assessing each child’s behavior, attention, and cooperation with the cognitive assessment tasks.<sup>50</sup> Any forms with PII will be left with the school coordinator for safekeeping until the next day of assessments. At the end of the field period, the coordinator will be asked to destroy the materials. Certain days during the field period when no regular school visits are occurring will be designated for conducting make-up assessments with children who were previously absent.

If a participating school changes its mind and refuses to participate in the spring 2024 round after participating in the fall 2023 round, and attempts to convert the school’s refusal are unsuccessful, then the study will attempt to assess the sampled children outside of the school. Other circumstances where a child may be assessed outside of school include when sampled children transfer into a school that never agreed to participate in the study or into a school in a district that refused to allow its schools to participate, or when sampled children are no longer enrolled in a school and are being homeschooled. The cognitive assessment procedures will remain the same regardless of the setting.

Prior to assessing a child outside of school, the assessor will contact the parent to confirm that the child is enrolled in a school that has not agreed to participate in the study for the current round of data collection (referred to as a refusal school) or is being homeschooled. If the parent informs the assessor that the child is not being homeschooled or has transferred out of a refusal school and into another school, the assessor will collect information about the school into which the child has transferred (referred to as a transfer school), and attempts will be made to recruit the district and school and assess the child in the transfer school. However, if it is determined that the child either attends a refusal school (or a school in a refusal district) or is homeschooled, the assessor will ask the parent when and where he or she would like the assessment to take place. Possible locations for the child assessment include a library, an after-school program location, or the child’s house. The assessor will try to accommodate the preferences of the parent as much as possible.

### *Teacher surveys*

As in the fall 2023 round, kindergarten teachers will again be asked to log on to the MyECLS website to complete a teacher-level survey about their background and classroom. Primary teachers of sampled

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<sup>50</sup> Assessors will base their observations on the cognitive portion of the assessment, that is the reading, mathematics, and executive function items. They will not consider the child’s behavior during the height and weight measurements when completing the form.

children will also be asked to complete child-level surveys about those children that they teach. Team leaders will confirm the teachers of the sampled students, as well as any other kindergarten teachers in the school, with school coordinators during the study activities call. If children’s teachers have changed, or new teachers have joined the school, team leaders will update the MyECLS website with the corrected information.

In the spring 2024 kindergarten round, the special education teachers or related service providers of kindergarten children who have an IEP on file and are receiving special education services will be asked to complete web surveys about their background and qualifications in a special education teacher-level survey. They also will be asked to answer questions about the types of services the sampled children who have an IEP receive in a separate child-level special education survey. Team leaders will collect information about special education teachers in the study activities call. For each child that school coordinators have indicated has an IEP or must be excluded from the assessment, team leaders will ask for the name and classroom information of the child’s special education teacher or related services provider. This information will then be entered into the MyECLS website by the team leaders.

After the study activities call with team leaders, school coordinators will be asked to notify teachers of the upcoming spring 2024 data collection via an email provided to them by the study. The coordinators will also be asked to distribute hard-copy packets to the teachers, with a letter reminding them of the study and asking them to visit the MyECLS website to complete their surveys.<sup>51</sup> Teachers will receive an email with their unique PIN, used to access the website. Upon logging on to the website using the PIN, the teachers will be asked to provide their email address and a password that will be used upon subsequent visits to the website. Teacher packets will also contain the ECLS-K:2024 teacher fact sheet and an incentive check.<sup>52</sup> The teacher packets will be labeled with a sticker with the U.S. Department of Education seal and the message, “Important information from the U.S. Department of Education.” on the outside of the envelope.

As in the prior round, primary kindergarten teachers will be provided \$20 for the teacher-level survey and \$7 for any child-level surveys they are asked to complete. Kindergarten teachers who do not teach sampled children will receive \$20 for teacher-level survey. In order to have a consistent incentive structure for all teachers participating in a school, special education teachers will also be offered an incentive of \$20 plus \$7 per child-level survey. The expectation is that each special education teacher will complete two child-level surveys, on average, for an average incentive of \$34 per special education teacher. Teachers will again receive an electronic newsletter with study and educational information.

Team leaders will again work with school coordinators to prompt nonresponding teachers. Email templates—contained in Attachment A-1—will be provided for this purpose and can be sent either by the team leader or the school coordinator. As in the previous round, paper surveys will be distributed upon request and to non-responders. Depending on the timing of the school visit in relation to the field period, team leaders will distribute the paper surveys on the first day of the school visit, asking teachers to have them completed by the last day of the school visit if possible. If the school visit is early in the field period, the team leader may visit the school later to drop-off and collect paper surveys.

#### *School administrator survey*

In the spring 2024, school administrators will be asked to complete a web survey containing questions about the school administrator, the school staff, and the school building. During the study activities call, the team leaders will ask the school coordinators to confirm the school administrator information that was collected during the school recruitment phase. After the study activities call, the school coordinator will be asked to notify the school administrator of the upcoming study tasks. A welcome packet will then be

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<sup>51</sup> Teachers in schools that were recruited too late to participate in the fall kindergarten round will be introduced to the study and provided details on the spring 2024 data collection in the notification email and welcome letter. See Attachment A-1 for these materials.

<sup>52</sup> All school staff incentive payments are sent only if allowed by district and school policy.

included in the package the coordinator receives after the study activities call. The outside of the packet will be labeled with a sticker with the U.S. Department of Education seal and the message, “Important information from the U.S. Department of Education.” The school coordinator will be asked to distribute it to the administrator. The packet will contain a letter with instructions for accessing the MyECLS website to complete the school administrator survey, an ECLS-K:2024 fact sheet, and an incentive check for \$25. School administrators will also be emailed the quarterly electronic newsletter, containing study and educational information. They will be encouraged to share the newsletter with other school staff.

Also included in the school administrator packet will be instructions on completing the survey, with descriptions of the types of questions included in the survey. The worksheet is provided as it is expected that school administrators may prefer to collect the data needed to respond to the questions from various sources.

All school administrator survey sections can be launched from the school administrator home screen on the MyECLS website. Administrators will be emailed a unique PIN to access the website for the first time, at which time they will be prompted to enter their email address and a password which will be used for subsequent visits to the website. The school administrator will be encouraged to review the description of the survey items and determine whether to complete the sections him or herself, or to ask a knowledgeable school staff member to complete select sections. The school administrator will be provided with a secondary PIN to provide to the designee to access the MyECLS website in this situation. Most of the survey sections may be completed by a designee, but the study requests that the principal or head administrator complete the section about his/her personal characteristics. These questions appear in a separate section that can be accessed using only the school administrator login.

As with the teacher surveys, school coordinators will be asked to follow-up with nonresponding school administrators throughout the course of the field period, using provided email templates. Team leaders can also complete the follow-up if preferred. Paper surveys are also available and will be distributed to non-responders or upon request.

### *Parent survey*

As in the fall 2023 kindergarten round, parents of sampled children will again be asked to complete a web survey. The survey and all follow-up messages will again be available in both English and Spanish. The parent welcome letter will also be available in Mandarin. The school coordinator will be asked to notify parents that an information study packet will soon be sent home in their child’s backpack. The school coordinator package that is mailed after the study activities call will include parent packets for distribution.<sup>53</sup> The outside of the parent packet will be labeled with a sticker with the U.S. Department of Education seal and the message, “Important information from the U.S. Department of Education.” Each packet will contain a letter reminding parents of the study, with instructions to log on to the MyECLS website using the PIN that is included in the packet. The packet will also include an ECLS-K:2024 parent fact sheet, a \$15 Mastercard®, and a children’s book. Parents will be asked to visit the website to update their contact information and complete the web survey. Parents who did not provide consent in the fall 2023 round will again be asked to provide consent for their children’s participation. Parents who provided consent in the fall 2023 round will not be asked to provide consent again. Similarly, parents who refused their child’s participation in the study will not be asked about consent.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Parents of children in schools that were recruited too late to participate in the fall kindergarten round will be introduced to the study and provided details on the spring 2024 data collection in the notification email and welcome letter. See Attachment A-1 for these materials.

<sup>54</sup> If school coordinators hear from parents who have changed their mind about their children’s participation, the team leader will notify the home office. Study staff will then manually update consent from obtained to refused and the assessment will not be conducted for those children. School staff and parent surveys will still be collected for children with a status of refused consent.

The school coordinators and team leaders will monitor the completion of web surveys and follow-up with parents as necessary. As in the fall round, email templates will be provided to remind nonresponding parents to complete the survey, and will be distributed by the school coordinator or the team leader.<sup>55</sup> As the field period progresses, team leaders will assign nonresponding parents to assessors for telephone follow-up. Initial calls will be made to remind parents to complete the survey on the web, while in later calls assessors will attempt to complete the survey on the telephone with the parents. Interpreters, both family members and professionals, will again be used to include as many non-English speaking parents in the study as possible. If deemed necessary to maximize the collection of parent data, an abbreviated paper parent survey will be distributed to non-responding parents near the end of the field period. The two-page survey, along with a cover letter explaining the importance of the parent data, will be packed in an envelope containing a label stating “To the parents of <CHILD’S NAME>”. The letter will also note that parents still have the option to complete the full survey if they wish. Parents will be asked to complete the survey for the child’s name that appears on the envelope containing the materials, and to return the survey in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. English and Spanish versions of the abbreviated survey and cover letters will be available. The materials will be mailed to the school coordinator, who will be asked to send the materials home to the applicable parents via their children’s backpacks. Attachment A-1 and B2-b contain the cover letter and items from the abbreviated parent survey.

### **B.2.2.3 Spring 2025 First-Grade Study Activities**

The spring first-grade round of the ECLS-K:2024 will be conducted using similar procedures as in the kindergarten rounds of the study. Direct child assessments and the executive function task will be included, and height and weight measurements will be conducted with students in the subsample schools. Primary first-grade and special education teachers of sampled children, as well as school administrators, will be asked to log on to the MyECLS website to complete web surveys. A vision evaluation is being considered for the spring first-grade round (and possibly the third-grade round, conducted in spring 2027). If NCES decides to move forward with these evaluations, full details will be included in a subsequent OMB revision request that includes a 30D public comment period.

#### *Advance School Contact*

Because the spring 2025 first-grade round will occur one year after the previous round of data collections, school recruiters will contact school coordinators in the beginning of the 2024-25 school year to obtain updated school, child, and teacher information and set a date for the spring 2025 school visit. School coordinators will first receive an email in fall 2024, asking them to log on to the MyECLS website to review the current information the study has for the study participants and to note any changes, particularly if a student has since left the school. Instructions for logging on to the website using a new, unique PIN will be included; the PIN will be sent in a separate email. Upon logging on to the website using the PIN, the teachers will be asked to provide their email address and a password that will be used upon subsequent visits to the website. Attached to the email will be a checklist of responsibilities for the school coordinator for the first-grade round. This checklist is similar to what was used in the previous rounds. See Attachment A-2 for the advance school contact materials.

Shortly after the email has been sent, school recruiters will follow-up with the coordinators to discuss any updates to the school or child information. If a sampled child has left the school, attempts will be made to collect information about the child’s new school so that it can be recruited into the study. School recruiters will also collect information on each child’s primary teacher, as well as any special education teachers. Children’s grade will also be collected; off-grade students will not be excluded from the study. The school recruiters will update the MyECLS website with all the information collected during the advance school contact telephone call.

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<sup>55</sup> Text message survey reminder templates will also be provided to the school coordinator, upon request.

As part of the advance school contact efforts in the fall of 2024, the school coordinator will be asked to distribute a postcard to parents in their children’s backpacks. The postcard will ask parents to visit the study website to update their contact information.

Transfer school recruitment. As the school recruiters learn of new transfer schools, they will recruit the new districts (as applicable) and schools. As in the previous round, recruitment of transfer schools in new districts will begin with recruitment of the districts. Letters informing the district of the study and the name of the school to which a base year participating child has moved will be followed by a telephone call by the school recruiter seeking cooperation. As these new districts agree to participate, the transfer schools will be contacted for recruitment. Study information mailings will be followed by telephone calls by the school recruiter to gain cooperation and to designate a school coordinator. Districts that are already cooperating will receive notification that a participating child has moved to a new school within the district. That transfer school will then be contacted for recruitment. Transfer school recruitment is expected to occur throughout early 2025.

Sample Tracking. As was done in the advance school contact period prior to the spring 2024 kindergarten round, sample tracking activities will also occur prior to the spring 2025 round. Parents will be mailed a postcard asking them to log on to the MyECLS website to update their contact information. Trained tracing specialists will be employed to locate families that move schools without providing updated contact information to the school or on the MyECLS website. They will actively pursue locating information through school sources, local directories, and directory assistance. They may also employ services such as National Change of Address (NCOA) directories available from the U.S. Postal Service in order to improve the rate of locating parents.

Spring 2025 advance school contact. In early spring 2025, school coordinators will be emailed and asked to review the child and teacher information contained on the MyECLS website and to note any changes to that information to be conveyed to the team leader in the upcoming study activities call. The school coordinator will be asked to notify school staff and parents of the upcoming study tasks using a provided email template. The home office will then mail the school coordinator study packets to be distributed to teachers and the school administrator, as well as for parents to be sent home in children’s backpacks. The mailing will also contain a letter for the school coordinator with instructions for distributing the respondent packets and encouraging participation, as well as a \$35 incentive check.

Team leaders will then conduct study activities calls in March and April 2025. As in the kindergarten rounds, they will review and update school, child, and teacher information that was collected in the fall advance school contact, confirm the dates of the study visit, and ask the school coordinator to reserve space for the study activities. They will also ask the school coordinator to confirm the special education teachers or related services provider for sampled children with an IEP. Team leaders will record any updated information in the MyECLS website.

If transfer children are identified during the school activities calls, school recruiters will contact and attempt recruitment of the new districts and schools, using the procedures described above, so that the transfer school and child can be included in the spring 2025 data collection. If recruitment efforts are not successful, attempts will be made to assess the transfer children at home or another neutral location. Parent surveys will also still be administered.

#### *Direct child assessment and other child activities*

A new cognitive assessment will be developed for the first-grade data collection. Easy warm-up items will be used to acclimate the children to the study activities. Many of the same reading and mathematics items administered in the kindergarten rounds will be used again, but some easier items will be dropped while some more advanced items will be added so that the assessment is grade appropriate. As before, the



assessment will be two stages, beginning with items that will be used to route each child to a second-stage form containing either low, medium, or high difficulty items. The reading and mathematics cognitive assessment will be followed by the executive function task. Children in the height and weight subsample will again have their measurements taken, following the same protocol described above. At the conclusion of the child activities, the assessors will again complete an Assessor Observation Form, recording their observations of the children's behavior and attention to the assessment tasks.

Unlike in the two kindergarten rounds, the spring 2025 first-grade assessment will include the language screener only for children who did not pass the screener in spring 2024 round (or who did not take the kindergarten assessment). Children who passed the screener in that round will begin the child activities with warm-up items, used to transition children into the cognitive assessment. For these warm-up items, the child's response is not coded as correct or incorrect. If the child answers a warm-up item incorrectly, the assessor will have instructions on the laptop to provide the correct response to the child before moving on to the next item. The reading and mathematics items will then be administered. Children who did not pass the language screener in the spring 2024 round will be administered the screener again, in place of the warm-up items. The results of the screener will again dictate the cognitive items that the children will receive, either the English assessment, the Spanish assessment, or the EBRS items only. Eligible subsample children, regardless of the language they speak, will have their height and weight measurements taken.

The team leaders and assessors will meet the school coordinator in the morning of each study visit day (if the coordinator is available), set up the assessment space, and meet the teachers. The same assessment protocols as used in the kindergarten rounds will be followed: children will be greeted in their classrooms, brought to the assessment space, introduced to the tasks, and then returned to their classrooms at the conclusion of the study activities. Special attention will be paid to building rapport with the children so that they are comfortable and relaxed before beginning the assessment. Breaks will be taken as needed or to accommodate classroom activities. All study materials containing PII will be left in the schools at the end of each study visit day and at the conclusion of the visits. School coordinators will be instructed to destroy the materials at the end of the field period.

### *Teacher surveys*

As in the previous rounds, the spring first-grade data collection will include teacher-level and child-level web surveys. Primary first-grade and special education teachers of participating students will be asked to complete the background survey as well as the surveys about each of the individual sampled children that they teach. Unlike the kindergarten rounds, however, a census of teachers will not be taken. That is, only teachers of sampled students will be asked to complete surveys in the spring first-grade round and subsequent ECLS-K:2024 rounds.

While it is expected that most of the sampled children will have advanced to first-grade in the 2024-25 school year, some children may repeat kindergarten or move to an interim grade instead. These sampled children will remain in the study and will complete all study activities. Their teachers will also be asked to complete background and child-level surveys. The teacher- and child-level surveys will contain many of the same items as those for first-grade teachers; however, there are some different questions for teachers of children who are below grade.

Teacher packets, each containing a study welcome letter, an ECLS-K:2024 teacher fact sheet, and an incentive check will be provided to the school coordinator for distribution. Each packet will be labeled with a sticker with the U.S. Department of Education seal and the message, "Important information from the U.S. Department of Education." on the outside of the envelope. The letter will contain instructions for accessing the MyECLS website. A separate email will be sent to teachers with their unique PIN that

should be used to access the website. Upon logging on to the website for the first time, teachers will be prompted to enter their email address and a password to use upon subsequent visits to the website.

The same teacher incentive model used in the kindergarten rounds will again be used in the spring 2025 first-grade round. Each primary and special education teacher will receive \$20 for the teacher-level survey and \$7 for each child-level survey he or she is asked to complete. As a non-monetary incentive, teachers will be emailed a newsletter with study and other educational information. School coordinators, with assistance from the team leaders, will monitor survey completion, following up with nonresponding teachers as needed. Email reminder templates will be provided for school coordinators to use as needed. Paper surveys will also be available upon request or for nonresponding teachers. Depending on when the school visit falls during the field period, team leaders will either distribute paper surveys while at the school for the assessment activities or later in the field period.

#### *School administrator survey*

The spring 2025 first-grade round will include school administrator web surveys. After the study activities call, school coordinators will be asked to distribute an informational packet to the school administrators. The packets will contain a letter reminding the administrator of the study activities, with instructions for logging on to the MyECLS website to complete their survey. Also included will be the ECLS-K:2024 fact sheet and a \$25 incentive check. The outside of the packet will be labeled with a sticker with the U.S. Department of Education seal and the message, “Important information from the U.S. Department of Education.” A separate email will be sent to school administrators with their unique PIN that should be used to access the website. Upon logging on to the website for the first time, they will be prompted to enter their email address and a password to use upon subsequent visits to the website.

As part of the study packet, school administrators will also be provided with a worksheet containing instructions for completion of the survey. The worksheet will also include descriptions of the survey items so that the administrator can determine whether to assign sections to a designee and to allow for data to be collected from other sources, such as school records, before the survey is accessed. Each school administrator will be sent a PIN for a designee to use when accessing the MyECLS website for the first time. The designee will then be instructed to enter an email address and password for use in subsequent visits. All sections of the survey can be completed by either the school administrator or a designee, with the exception of the administrator background section. This section will only be accessible by the school administrator as it will contain items about the education, experience, and other background topics relevant to the administrator.

As with the teacher surveys, the school coordinator and team leader will monitor survey completion, following up with email reminders as needed. Paper school administrator surveys will be available upon request or for non-responders. The team leader will either distribute the paper survey when at the school for the assessments, or later in the field period. School administrators will also be emailed the study newsletter, and will be encouraged to share it with other school staff.

#### *Parent survey*

The spring 2025 first-grade data collection will again include parent surveys. The protocols for administering the survey and following-up with non-responders will remain the same as in the previous rounds. Parents will be provided with a study packet by the school coordinator, who will send it home in the children’s backpacks. The packet will contain a letter reminding the parents of the study and inviting them to log on to the MyECLS website to update their contact information and complete the survey. The parent consent module of the MyECLS website will not be used in the first-grade round, as only children with consent in the base year rounds (fall and spring kindergarten) will be assessed in the first-grade

round.<sup>56</sup> If coordinators hear from parents who wish to refuse consent for the child’s participation in the spring 2025 round, the coordinators will notify study staff who will communicate with the home office so that the consent status can be updated.

The parent packet will also contain a \$15 Mastercard® and a children’s book as incentives. The outside of the packet will be labeled with a sticker with the U.S. Department of Education seal and the message, “Important information from the U.S. Department of Education.” Later in the round, parents will also be given a printed study newsletter, placed in their children’s backpacks by the school coordinator.

Team leaders and school coordinators will track parent survey completion, following up with non-responders using email templates.<sup>57</sup> Later in the field period, team leaders will also assign assessors nonresponding parent cases to follow-up with by telephone. Initial reminder calls will be made, followed by calls in which assessors will attempt to complete the survey on the telephone. In some cases, especially at the end of the field period, in-person visits will be made to complete parent surveys. As in the spring 2024 round, an abbreviated paper parent survey may again be used to maximize the collection of parent data from non-responders. The survey, along with a cover letter, will be packaged in an envelope containing the child’s name. It will be sent home via the children’s backpack and parents will be asked to return the completed survey via the enclosed postage-paid envelope.

### **B.3 Methods to Secure Cooperation, Maximize Response Rates, and Deal with Nonresponse**

This section describes methods for securing cooperation and maximizing completion rates for the national data collections in fall 2023, spring 2024, and spring 2025, including advance school contacts and transfer school recruitment. A major challenge in any survey today is obtaining high response rates. The main problem associated with nonresponse is the potential for nonresponse bias in the estimates produced using data collected from those people who do respond. Bias can occur when the people who respond are systematically different from the people who do not. The approach that will be used in the ECLS-K:2024 national rounds to reduce the potential for bias is to design the data collection procedures and methods so as to reduce nonresponse (e.g., generate engaging targeted respondent materials, contact respondents using preferred methods of communication, provide frequent study updates and preliminary findings, and display materials and study information on an easily accessible respondent website. Responsive design models may also be considered.). While the statistical approaches are important in controlling biases and costs, the recruitment and data collection procedures and materials are at the heart of a successful survey.

#### **B.3.1 Gaining Cooperation from a Variety of Sources**

Cooperation issues loom large in any major school-based survey today. The demands of required testing, which have increased since the enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), may reduce time for and willingness to participate in voluntary studies like the ECLS-K:2024, so districts and schools may be increasingly less likely to cooperate. Parents are increasingly skeptical about the value of surveys and non-required tests for their children. Teachers are heavily burdened and often reluctant to spend time on non-teaching activities. Incentives have proven to be effective tools in achieving high response rates, and the study plans to offer monetary incentives to schools, teachers, and parents. The study also plans to offer non-monetary incentives to schools and parents. See Section A.9 of this submission for a full discussion of incentives.

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<sup>56</sup> Note that if the vision evaluation option is exercised, parents of children in either the full sample or the subsample (dependent on the vision option exercised) will be asked to provide consent for that task. In this case, the consent module will display in MyECLS, although it would be specific to consent for the vision evaluation task.

<sup>57</sup> Text message reminder templates will be provided to school coordinators, upon request.

The national recruitment plan approaches the school as a community. The study aims to establish rapport with the whole community—principals, teachers, parents, and children. The school community must be approached with respect and sensitivity to achieve high initial response rates and maintain cooperation for future rounds of data collection. Moreover, to convey the study’s legitimacy, various respondent materials will include a list of organizations that have endorsed the ECLS-K:2024. The study is endorsed by:

- Alliance for Excellent Education
- American Federation of Teachers
- American Montessori Society
- Association for Middle Level Education
- Association for Montessori International/USA
- Association of Christian Schools International
- Association of Christian Teachers and Schools
- Christian Schools International
- Council for Exceptional Children
- Council of Chief State School Officers
- Council of Islamic Schools in North America
- International Literary Association
- Islamic Schools League of America
- Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
- National Alliance of Christian Schools
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Independent Schools
- National Association of State Boards of Education
- National Catholic Educational Association
- National Christian School Association
- National Council of Teachers and Mathematics
  - National Institute for Early Education Research
- National Parent Teacher Association
- National School Boards Association
- National Science Teaching Association
- Texas State Teachers Association
- The School Superintendents Association
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
- WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools

In order to better understand the decision-making process when considering participation in the study, multiple focus groups were held with school administrators (in 2019 and 2020), parents (in 2019 and 2020), and teachers (in 2020) (OMB #1850-0803 v.246 and #1850-0803 v.264). Participants were asked to discuss their reservations about participating in studies such as the ECLS-K:2024. They were also asked to consider the types of information that would be needed before participation and to review and comment on draft recruitment materials. The results were used to revise draft respondent recruitment materials, and draft new materials for use in mailings and on the MyECLS website.

### *Secure District and School Cooperation*

As described in section B.2.1, recruitment began with state mailings, followed by mailings to districts and schools in summer and fall 2022. The process by which cooperation is sought for the national rounds was customized based on conditions in the local school systems. For example, for many districts an informational package and a telephone call was sufficient to secure cooperation, but in some districts, there were other required materials that must had to be submitted prior to approval. Experiences from recent NCES studies with district contacts and decision-making processes were used to develop a highly efficient, tailored approach to gaining cooperation from districts. District requirements that district personnel contact the schools first, that they disseminate the school information packets, or that they receive copies of all communications with schools will be followed and documented.

Successful school recruitment depends on an experienced field staff to carry out the recruitment contacts. Recruiters were trained to address a variety of participation concerns, while simultaneously communicating the value of the study. Once district cooperation was secured, schools received a package of materials to convey the study's legitimacy and importance. A sticker with the U.S. Department of Education seal and the message, "Important information from the U.S. Department of Education." was included on the outside of packages. Included in this package was a cover letter describing the study and stating the name of the person at the district who had approved (whenever possible) so that the recipient immediately understood the importance and the widespread support of the study. Providing this information up front encouraged school participation and perhaps sped the schools' decision-making process. The information in the packet was presented in a way that was clear and specific, yet concise, and emphasized that the study team will work closely with schools to accomplish the study with the least burden and disruption possible. The package also included fact sheets and various materials for the school administrator. Special letters designed to address specific reasons for refusal at the district and school levels were also be developed. During the recruitment phase, the recruiter collected school information, identified the school coordinator, ascertained the school's consent requirements, and scheduled the fall 2023 assessment date. Collecting these data in advance will allow the school coordinator to focus on the data collection activities prior to the fall school visit. In-person recruitment visits to large districts to encourage their participation and explain the value of the study were made as needed.

School recruiters were provided welcome letters, contact information, nonresponse materials, email templates, and completed packages for special handling districts. These materials formed a toolkit that allowed the recruiters to customize their contact with schools as needed. Recruiters worked diligently with schools to facilitate study participation. Experienced field staff made in-person visits to schools, presented at board meetings, and worked with schools to facilitate successful recruitment of the ECLS-K:2024 districts and schools.

The home office study staff reviewed cases that initially refused to participate and decided on appropriate strategies to try and convert the refusal, enlisting the assistance of district or diocesan staff to encourage their participation if appropriate. Best practices from the national district and school recruitment will be carried over to the recruitment of transfer districts and schools, as they are identified throughout the life of the study.

The additional burden of a longitudinal survey (and the need to communicate clearly to parents and schools the expected burden of participation in a longitudinal survey) makes securing cooperation of the originally-sampled districts and schools even more challenging. The base year must pave the way for concerted follow-up efforts in later rounds by collecting high quality data to help maintain cooperation and track families who move and children who change schools.

#### *Securing Cooperation of Children's Parents and Teachers*

In the fall of 2023, the focus shifted to securing child, parent, and teacher cooperation. Parent respondent materials included welcome letters, fact sheets designed specifically for parents, and reminders about survey completion. Consent forms were available on the MyECLS website, but were also provided on paper for districts and schools that requested paper consent forms. Teacher respondent materials included a welcome letter, a welcome email, and a fact sheet tailored specifically for teachers. Similar respondent materials will be distributed to school administrators in the spring 2024 and 2025 rounds. All respondents will also be provided a thank you email at the end of each data collection round. Teachers and school staff will also receive the Certificate of Contribution at the end of the spring 2024 and 2025 rounds. These respondent materials are available in Attachment A-1 and A-2.

As school staff increasingly move to digital solutions for their everyday needs, the MyECLS website will allow school coordinators to provide school information, will allow parents to provide consent for their children's participation, and will allow all respondents to complete their respective web surveys. Hard-copy parent consent materials and school and teacher surveys will be available by request. Principals and school coordinators will be provided materials, including checklists and tip sheets, to promote and encourage participation of school staff and parents, to gather information from relevant staff as necessary, and to easily enter this information on the website.

Field staff will discuss the preferred method for distributing respondent materials and contacting parents and school staff about the study. The recommended method will be to push information electronically to parents via the MyECLS website, which can either be done directly by the school coordinator or by the field staff. However, schools can be very reluctant to share parental contact information with study staff. In addition, parents reported in the focus groups that materials sent home from the school have more legitimacy than study materials mailed to their home from a data collection contractor. Thus, a variety of communications in print and electronic format were developed for school coordinators to use when reaching out to participants in their school. This enables the school coordinator to simply distribute materials rather than take time to draft them as well. Furthermore, in instances where school coordinators agree to share parental contact information, nonresponding parents will be contacted via telephone by local field staff assigned to their case. Field staff can complete the parent survey with the parent via telephone or if needed, in-person. Additionally, school administrator and teacher surveys will be available on paper upon request.

#### *Secure Transfer School Cooperation*

The process by which new transfer districts and schools are contacted will be largely the same as during the national recruitment period. A proactive and intensive approach will be used to secure the cooperation of the new districts, dioceses to which sampled Catholic schools belong, and schools.

As previously noted, the process by which cooperation is sought will be customized based on conditions in the local school systems. The study's procedures will be flexible enough to address the concerns and needs of districts/dioceses and schools to the greatest extent possible without compromising the systematic procedures that are essential to high-quality data collection. New districts into which children transfer will be mailed an information study package containing a letter explaining the study and requesting cooperation to contact the transfer schools. Included in the mailing will be the ECLS-K:2024

fact sheet. A sticker with the U.S. Department of Education seal and the message, “Important information from the U.S. Department of Education.” will be included on the outside of the packages. The mailing will be followed by telephone calls from a school recruiter to secure participation. Transfer schools will then be mailed an information letter and the ECLS-K:2024 fact sheet. School recruiters or team leaders will then contact the school to obtain cooperation, appoint a school coordinator, and set a school visit date.

Districts that are already cooperating will be notified that a sampled child has moved into a school within their district. The transfer school will then be mailed a study package and contacted by a school recruiter to gain cooperation. Schools that are already participating in the study and that have a sampled child transfer into their school from an different originally-sampled school will be notified that the new student is also part of the ECLS-K:2024 study. Information about that transfer child, along with the rest of sampled children, will be collected during the study activities call.

Every effort will be made to recruit new transfer districts and schools within the round in which they are identified so that the study activities can be conducted seamlessly. The burden on transfer schools will be less than on most originally sampled schools, as transfer schools will typically contain only one or two sampled children. School visits to transfer schools will typically last a half day or less. A smaller assessment space is required and fewer classrooms are impacted. Securing the cooperation of transfer districts/dioceses in the ECLS-K:2024 will be handled by a small group of experienced field recruiters with extensive experience in this capacity.

### **B.3.2 Methods to Maximize Response Rates**

#### *Originally-Sampled and Transfer District Recruitment*

A successful district recruitment effort is essential to securing adequate school response rates. The main areas of focus are the timing of contact, research proposals, obtaining formal approval, and refusal conversion.

Timing. All originally-sampled districts were contacted early in the 2022-23 recruitment phase, as securing district cooperation early allowed sufficient time for recruiting schools. Accordingly, early contacts allowed the study to identify barriers to cooperation, such as required research proposals and districts requiring refusal conversion. For the ECLS-K:2011 kindergarten base year (i.e., the 2010-11 school year), a 77 percent district-level school cooperation rate was obtained. However, it was expected that district recruitment will be more challenging in the current environment of the ECLS-K:2024 and as such district recruitment is expected to continue throughout 2023. As noted above, transfer districts will be contacted as soon as possible to allow enough time to gain cooperation at both the district and school levels so that the study activities can occur in the same round.

Research Proposals. Field recruiters first contacted originally-sampled districts requiring special research proposals to ensure that the study was able to meet deadlines and that study staff preparing the proposals used the required applications and procedures. Once submitted, applications were closely tracked, with regular follow-up with appropriate district personnel on the status. Once the study was approved, recruiters reviewed any special requirements within the district research proposal and response to ensure the study is compliant. For example, some districts will not allow certain schools to be contacted or will not allow for school and teacher incentive payments. These requirements were documented so that school recruiters and, eventually, team leaders, are aware. Whenever possible, the recruiter who worked with the district also recruited the schools within that district. The same procedures will be used as transfer districts are identified.

Formal Approval. For all districts, every effort was, and in the case of transfer districts will be, made to receive formal approval from a district staff member, such as the superintendent, deputy superintendent,

testing director, or early childhood education director. Experience has shown that, when contacted, schools usually ask who at the district-level has approved the study. Being able to respond affirmatively with a specific name and title facilitates the school recruitment process.

Refusal Conversion. Originally-sampled district refusal conversion efforts began early, using all available methods, including in-person visits and presentations. In addition to allowing field recruiters to contact schools, cooperative districts were encouraged to support the study and encourage their schools to participate. Although it is anticipated that the study will face less resistance when recruiting transfer districts, the same procedures will be followed as needed.

#### *School Staff, Parent, and Child Instruments*<sup>58</sup>

There are five areas that will be focused on in order to maximize completion rates for the various respondent instruments: (1) easily accessible study materials and surveys, (2) instrument length, (3) design of questions, (4) non-English instruments, and (5) avoiding refusals and converting initial refusals to completed interviews. For purposes of historical comparisons, in the ECLS-K:2011's kindergarten base year (i.e., the 2010-11 school year), response rates for parents were 80 percent for fall or spring participation, or 50 percent for the overall base year response rate taking into account the schools' response rate.

Easily accessible study materials. As previously noted, the use of the MyECLS website provides respondents with an easily accessible format to access materials and complete their respective surveys. Unlike the ECLS-K and ECLS-K:2011 where parent interviews with various respondents needed to be scheduled, the current cohort's focus on digital solutions minimizes the restrictions respondents face with completing voluntary tasks (work, classes, recreational activities, vacations, etc.). Completion rates may improve when respondents have the flexibility to access and complete materials as needed, with guidance and oversight from their school coordinator and/or ECLS-K:2024 field staff.

Instrument length. Overall, instrument design occurs with the knowledge that completion rates typically are higher when the survey is shorter in length. The average length of time to complete items in the ECLS-K:2011 was carefully considered during the design phase of the ECLS-K:2024 to determine if questions should be cut entirely or simplified to keep surveys to the desired time. Priority was placed on ensuring that the surveys are not too lengthy and burdensome. This was balanced with the purpose of the longitudinal nature of the ECLS-K:2024 where the goal is to build understanding of change and/or stability within schools, classrooms, and families in part by asking the same or similar questions over time. Consideration will also be given to including ECLS legacy items to facilitate cross-cohort comparisons. Attachments B, C, D, and E provide the current full study instruments. Updated surveys will be included in OMB revision requests that include a 30D public review period.

Design of questions. As much as possible, the surveys will be streamlined so the questions included are straightforward and easy for respondents to answer. In addition, skip patterns based on answers to questions that appear earlier in the survey are built into the survey so that not all questions need to be asked of all respondents.

Non-English materials. To achieve high response rates, it is important that study procedures work to include non-English speaking parents to the greatest extent possible. As described in the data collection procedures, web and mailed versions of all parent recruitment materials (including the reminder messages) will be available in English and in Spanish. The study's introductory letter and consent forms will also be available in Mandarin. The field staff and school coordinator will discuss the home language of the participating parents; if warranted, the Spanish or Mandarin materials will be included in the

<sup>58</sup> NCES is currently considering a very brief (e.g., 1-2 page) short paper versions of the surveys for use with nonresponding parents late in the spring kindergarten and spring first-grade field period. Attachment B-2b contains the items drafted for this possible spring kindergarten abbreviated parent survey.



mailing, alongside the English materials. Additionally, family member or professional interpreters will be used to translate surveys when appropriate to include parents who speak a language other than English or Spanish.

Refusal avoidance and conversion procedures. Achieving acceptable school staff and parent response rates will require active and effective refusal conversion efforts. For parents, this activity must begin as soon as the parents receive access to their consent materials, whether they be digital or physical. For school staff, it will begin when respondents receive notification of the study and access to their web surveys. A key factor in converting refusals is the ability of the team leaders and assessors to clearly and confidently convey the purpose and importance of the study and the benefits that will be derived from it. This will be a focus of the field staff training. The training materials for averting refusals include information about becoming thoroughly familiar with the study, including answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) and respondent objections, drafting responses in the respondent's own words to FAQs, practicing saying these responses, and diagnosing respondent objections and quickly responding with a response tailored to the objection. The training includes self-analysis by recording responses and listening to them, preparing answers for different situations, using the voice effectively, and role-plays between trainers and field staff and between paired field staff, with one member of each pair acting as the respondent. Averting refusal training will focus specifically on addressing reasons for refusals on the parent survey component of the ECLS-K:2024. If a refusal occurs, the field staff will be instructed to record key demographic information about the refusing respondent (e.g., sex, approximate age) and the respondent's reason(s) (if given) for refusing to participate. This information will be evaluated by the field supervisor to determine the best strategy for converting refusals. Cases identified for refusal conversion will be assigned to a select group of field staff identified as possessing the necessary skills to act as refusal converters. Field managers will hold telephone conferences with the identified field staff to review the refusal conversion procedures and discuss strategies for converting refusals.

#### *School and Teacher Instruments*

School staff surveys will present their own unique challenges to field staff who will be working to maximize participation. District and school personnel have stated that they face increasing demands upon their schools for a variety of non-instructional activities, including requirements for state and district assessment. Sensitivity to these concerns will be essential to gaining cooperation for the ECLS-K:2024, and it must be made clear to school system personnel at all levels that the ECLS-K:2024 staff is more than willing to work with them to facilitate their participation with the least burden and disruption possible.

Feedback from school administrators and teachers in the ECLS-K and ECLS-K:2011 also indicated that there would have been increased study participation if they had had more time to complete the instruments. Distributing the instructions for accessing and completing the web surveys early enough in the school year to allow staff sufficient time to complete them will be critical. For the spring 2024 kindergarten round, most of the sampled children's primary and special education teachers, as well as the school administrators, will be identified during the previous fall round. While some changes in teacher assignments may be expected, the majority of teachers will remain the same in the spring. Study activities calls to confirm the teacher and school administrator information will be conducted from January to March 2024 so that information about accessing the surveys can be distributed at the start of the actual data collection period. For the spring 2025 first-grade round, the advance school contact in fall 2024 will allow study staff to collect primary and special education teachers and school administrator information well in advance of the March 2025 start of data collection. This will allow sufficient time after the distribution of respondent packets for teacher and school administrators to access and complete the web surveys before the end of the field period in June 2025.

In addition to the maximizing cooperation strategies described above, specific efforts made by team leaders to avoid refusals and to convert initial refusals to cooperating respondents will be needed in order to maximize completion rates for the school and teacher instruments. In the ECLS-K:2011's kindergarten base year (i.e., the 2010-11 school year), the school-level response rate was 63 percent. Teacher response rates varied by instrument (i.e., child-level and teacher-level instruments for both fall and spring kindergarten). In the base year, the weighed unit response rates for the teacher instruments varied from 80 to 85 percent and the overall response rates (i.e., school rate times teacher rate) varied from 50 to 53 percent.

Team leaders will be trained to be flexible in the timing in which they will follow-up with the school administrators and teachers to prompt for the completion of the surveys, when they distribute paper surveys to nonresponding school staff, and when they return to the school after the assessment visit as needed to pick up completed paper surveys. They will be encouraged to work with the school coordinator to email school staff survey reminders periodically throughout the field period using provided email templates. Team leaders will also be trained to apply general refusal aversion techniques to the collection of school staff and teacher surveys. These techniques will include analyzing the reasons for refusal, responding appropriately, and using their voice effectively.

#### *Parent Instruments*

In addition to the strategies used above to minimize parent non-response, locating parents of transfer children will also be critical for maintaining high completion rates for parent surveys overall and will help reduce nonresponse bias. It is expected that a substantial portion of participating children will transfer schools between rounds of data collections. A tracking system database with household contact and school information will be developed at the beginning of the study and the sample tracing activities described above will be conducted to locate children who transfer schools. Maintenance of this tracking database will be an important activity over the lifetime of the study, with updates of new information occurring through the final data collection round.

If children transfer to a school that is outside of a sampled PSU, they are not assessed; however, parents are still contacted to conduct the parent survey if possible, thereby retaining these cases as study participants. If the child transfers to a school that is in a sampled PSU, an attempt is made to complete all components of the study.

#### *Child Assessments*

The areas that will be focused on in order to maximize completion rates for the child assessments (and other child activities, such as height and weight collection) involve working with schools and teachers to schedule children for assessment at convenient times, keeping the assessment length as short as possible so that children do not miss too much class time, and conducting make-up assessments with consented children who are absent on the scheduled ECLS-K:2024 school visit. Although untimed, the national assessments are expected to last approximately one hour. Field staff will work with teachers to determine if the child is able to take the assessment during one session, or if the assessment should be broken up to better accommodate the child's or teacher's schedule. For example, the reading assessment could be administered in the morning, while the math assessment administered in the afternoon. The goal will be to be as flexible as possible to minimize classroom and learning disruptions. ECLS response rates at the child level have generally been high when enacting such refusal conversion techniques. For example, in the ECLS-K:2011 kindergarten base year (i.e., the 2010-11 school year), weighted student unit response rate for fall or spring participation was 89 percent. The overall base year response rate (i.e., the school rate times the child rate) was 56 percent.

It is expected that some consented children will be absent from school during the scheduled ECLS-K:2024 school visit. Days will be set aside throughout the field period in which some field staff have no assessments scheduled, so that make-up assessments can be more easily conducted.

As is the case with the parent survey, locating transfer children and the new school in which they are enrolled will be critical for maintaining high completion rates for child assessments overall and reducing nonresponse bias. Time will be needed to contact their new districts, schools, and study staff and encourage them to participate (if a child transfers to a school not already participating in the ECLS-K:2024), thereby allowing the transfer children to be assessed in the school. As children transfer, they may move to schools that decide not to participate in the study. In these cases, every effort will be made to assess the child at home or in a neutral location, such as a public library. Assessing children at home will allow for the inclusion of these children in the study, even when schools decline to participate in the study.

## **B.4 Tests of Methods and Procedures**

The previous kindergarten cohorts of the ECLS, the classes of 1998-99 and 2010-11, have informed the design of the ECLS-K:2024. By design, the ECLS-K:2024 data collection instruments are in large part a collection of items used in the ECLS-K and ECLS-K:2011, to allow comparisons between the various cohorts of kindergartners. However, because there are significant changes to the ECLS-K:2024 instrumentation and study procedures, namely the move from paper instruments or phone interviews to data collections on the web, a field test for the kindergarten and first-grade rounds of ECLS-K:2024 was conducted in the fall of 2022. The results of this K-1 field test will further inform instrument design as well as the sampling and operational procedures employed for the national kindergarten and first-grade data collections described in this submission.

A request to conduct usability testing of the kindergarten and first-grade field test survey instruments was approved by OMB (OMB #1850-0803 v280). Results of the usability testing were used to revise the kindergarten and first-grade field test instruments. The K-1 field test findings will be summarized in future revision requests to this submission, which will include a 30D public review period.

## **B.5 Individuals Responsible for Study Design and Performance**

The following individuals are responsible for the study design and the collection and analysis of the data for the ECLS-K:2024.

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