**Appendix A: Recruitment Materials**

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**Appendix A1 –[District Administrator] Emails and Phone Call Talking Points**

***Template for [District Administrator] Email***

Subject: Invitation to participate in REL Pacific’s Secondary Writing Toolkit evaluation study

Dear [District Administrator],

We are reaching out to you as [district] is eligible to take part in a study of the Secondary Writing Toolkit (“the Toolkit”), sponsored by the United States Department of Education (ED) in spring 2025.

The Toolkit has been developed to help educators implement the evidence-based practices outlined in the Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively Practice Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/practiceguide/22>). In other words, it reflects a translation of the research to practice. The Toolkit includes resources to support teachers’ Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and use of evidence-based instructional strategies in their own classrooms. A select group of schools in [site] will have the opportunity to try the Secondary Writing Toolkit in advance of public release as part of an implementation study conducted by researchers at Abt Global. The study will provide professional learning to coaches or teachers, allowing them to serve as peer facilitators who lead the PLCs within [district]’s schools.

**Will you consider supporting this important work?**

We would like to invite schools within your [unit of jurisdiction] to participate in this important work because we understand that writing instruction is a priority in [state]. We need your support and approval to reach out to the schools in your [unit of jurisdiction]. If they chose to join the study and can assure that teacher(s) and the administrator agree to participate, schools will receive the toolkit and professional development supports in the spring semester of 2025. Teachers will be asked to participate in a professional learning community spanning 4 to 5 months (each PLC will last about 1 hour). Peer facilitators (an eligible teacher or potentially another educator) will receive some additional professional learning (about 6–8 hours) to support their skills in leading these PLCs. School administrators and participating teachers and peer facilitators will be asked to participate in study data collection, including teacher instructional logs and an administrator survey. Teachers and peer facilitators will also be asked to complete a professional learning tracker and to participate in a focus group at the end of the year. To show our appreciation and help offset the costs of participation in data collection, we will be able to provide incentives to participating educators (see attached FAQ for details). We will also be able to provide participating schools with $5,500, which may be used to support any costs of participation.

We’re asking for your approval to reach out to the schools serving grades 6-8 within your [unit of jurisdiction] and, if possible, your support in facilitating introductions. If we don’t hear from you by [date], we’ll give you a call to follow up.

<Contact Name>

<Contact Role and information>

***Talking Points for [District Administrator] Call***

* Introduction.
	+ Detailed description of toolkit and alignment to [state’s] priorities.
	+ How schools in the [unit of jurisdiction] were identified for participation and eligibility requirements.
	+ Clarify Abt’s role in toolkit evaluation.
* Review intervention and study.
	+ Length of study.
	+ Breakdown of benefits for school, teachers, and students.
* Questions?
* Request for support/approval.
	+ Next steps for reaching out to school administrators.
	+ Best approach/approaches for demonstrating [district administrator’s] support for study.
* Next steps.
	+ Follow-up calls (if needed).
	+ Ask for help in reaching out to school administrators—send letter to school administrators and convene information session, at which we’ll speak.
	+ Other.

**Appendix A2 – Preliminary Letters to School Administrators and Teachers**

***Template for Letter [District Administrator] to School Administrators (to be lightly edited as appropriate to, for example, suit the role and context or reflect any prior communications)***

Dear [School Administrator],

Effective writing is considered an important skill in [site]. We are reaching out to you as [district] has agreed to take part in a study of the Secondary Writing Toolkit, conducted by Abt Global and sponsored by the United States Department of Education (ED) in spring 2025.

The US Department of Education-funded Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) for the Pacific region, in partnership with WestEd, developed the Secondary Writing Toolkit has help educators implement the evidence-based practices outlined in the Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively Practice Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/practiceguide/22>). In other words, it reflects a translation of the research to practice.

Conducting the evaluation in [site] gives our educators early access to implement the evidence-based Secondary Writing Toolkit that includes additional, study-provided support from the Toolkit’s developers at WestEd. The Toolkit is designed to support grade 6–8 ELA teachers’ adoption of evidence-based writing practices and thus improve student writing. Initially, teachers will get support to understand their strengths and areas for growth in using the evidence-based practices in the Secondary Writing Practice Guide. Over time, teachers will demonstrate knowledge and skills for teaching writing as recommended, assess students’ strengths and areas for growth in writing, plan instruction that incorporates recommended practices and addresses students’ needs, and exhibit a sense of efficacy as writers and teachers of writing.

**Will you consider being a part of this important work?**

If [School Name] decides to participate in the study, your school will receive the Toolkit and professional development supports in the spring semester of 2025. This will allow your grade 6–8 ELA teachers to get early access to the Toolkit and professional learning for a teacher (or, potentially, a coach or administrator) to serve as peer facilitator to help teachers implement the Toolkit. Teachers and peer facilitators will participate in a professional learning community (PLC) for approximately 4 to 5 months (each PLC will last about 1 hour). Peer facilitators will receive an additional 6–8 hours of professional learning. As part of study data collection, teachers and peer facilitators will be asked to complete a professional learning tracker and instructional logs describing their experiences and to participate in a focus group to discuss perceptions of the toolkit. School administrators will be asked to complete a survey to provide information about implementation and school context. To show their appreciation and help offset the costs of participation, Educators at your school will receive incentives for participating in data collection and your school will receive $5,500 (please see attached FAQs for more detail on data collection and incentives).

Please look for an email in the next day or so from REL Pacific, in which they will ask to talk with you more about this opportunity. For more information regarding the study, please contact Dr. Nicole Arshan, Principal Investigator, Abt Global, at WritingStudy@abtglobal.com or 301-347-5641.

Sincerely,

[District Administrator]

***Template for Letter from School Administrators to Staff (to be lightly edited as appropriate to, for example, suit the role and context or reflect any prior communications)***

Dear [Teacher],

Effective writing is considered an important skill in [site]. We are reaching out to you because [district] is has agreed to take part in a study of the Secondary Writing Toolkit conducted by Abt Global and sponsored by the United States Department of Education (ED) in spring 2025.

The US Department of Education-funded Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) for the Pacific region, in partnership with WestEd, developed the Secondary Writing Toolkit to help educators implement the evidence-based practices outlined in the Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively Practice Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/practiceguide/22>). In other words, it reflects a translation of the research to practice.

Conducting the evaluation in [site] gives us early access to implement the evidence-based Secondary Writing Toolkit that includes additional, study-provided support from the Toolkit’s developers at WestEd. The Toolkit is designed to support grade 6–8 ELA teachers’ adoption of evidence-based writing practices and thus improve student writing. Initially, teachers will get support to understand their strengths and areas for growth in using the evidence-based practices in the Secondary Writing Practice Guide. Over time, teachers will demonstrate knowledge and skills for teaching writing as recommended, assess students’ strengths and areas for growth in writing, plan instruction that incorporates recommended practices and addresses students’ needs, and exhibit a sense of efficacy as writers and teachers of writing.

**Will you consider being a part of this important work?**

In Spring 2025, grade 6–8 ELA teachers will be asked to participate in a professional learning community (PLC) focused on the Secondary Writing Toolkit. School staff will be invited to complete online professional learning trackers and instructional logs and invited to participate in a focus group. REL Pacific will show their appreciation and help offset the costs of participation with fully participating teachers and peer facilitators by providing an incentive for participation in data collection activities-- up to $350 for teachers or $450 for teachers who are also peer facilitators. Please see the attached FAQs for more detail, including specific time commitments and incentives for participating in data collection.

Please look for an email in the next day or so from REL Pacific, in which we will ask to talk with you more about this opportunity. For more information regarding the study, please contact Dr. Nicole Arshan, Principal Investigator, Abt Global, at WritingStudy@abtglobal.com or 301-347-5641.

Sincerely,

[School Administrator]

**Appendix A3 – – Follow-up Emails, Phone Call Talking Points, and Agendas for Information Session and Webinar**

***School Administrator Recruitment Follow-Up Email [forwarding initial email]***

Subject: Reminder: Invitation to participate in REL Pacific toolkit evaluation study

Dear [School Administrator],

Recently you received an email asking you to be a part of a study conducted by Abt Global, under the Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific (REL Pacific), on the efficacy of their Toolkit to support teaching secondary students to write effectively. **Will you consider being a part of this important work?**

We are inviting [School Name] to participate in this important work because the toolkit appears to fit your school’s priorities. The choice to participate in this study is yours to make, but we do hope you will accept. Schools will receive the toolkit and professional development supports in the spring of 2025. Teachers will be asked to participate in a professional learning community spanning 4 to 5 months (each PLC will last about 1 hour). Schools will be asked to participate in study data collection, including teacher instructional logs and an administrator survey. Teachers will also be asked to complete a professional learning tracker and to participate in a focus group at the end of the year. To show our appreciation for and help offset the costs of participation, we have budgeted incentives for participating schools and educators.

We have attached a list of Frequently Asked Questions and a Memorandum of Understanding with more detail. Could we set up a time to discuss the Toolkit study further and answer any other questions you may have? If we don’t hear from you by [date], we’ll give you a call to follow up.

<Contact Name>

<Contact Role and information>

***Teacher Recruitment Follow-Up Email [forwarding initial email]***

Subject: Reminder: Invitation to participate in REL Pacific toolkit evaluation study

Dear [Teacher],

Recently you received an email asking you to be a part of a study under the Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific (REL Pacific) Toolkit to support teaching secondary students to write effectively. As a reminder participants will incentives for participating in data collection activities.

The Abt Global researchers conducting this study will not share any individual-level data.The study will not be used to evaluate you or your school.Your school administrator has already agreed to allow us to contact you.

We hope that you will join your colleagues in using the toolkit and sharing your experiences in the study.

We have attached a list of Frequently Asked Questions. Again, please let us know if you have any issues either by emailing the study team at WritingStudy@abtglobal.com or by calling me at the number below.

<Contact Name>

<Contact Role and information>

***Talking Points for School Administrator Recruitment Call***

* Introduction.
	+ Detailed description of toolkit.
	+ Clarify Abt’s role in toolkit evaluation.
* Review intervention and study.
	+ Length of study.
	+ Breakdown of benefits for school, teachers, and students.
* Questions?
* Request to participate.
	+ Overview of activities (professional learning tracker, instructional log, focus groups, administrator survey).
	+ Incentives.
* Next steps.
	+ Follow-up calls, if needed.
	+ Ask for help in reaching out to teachers—send letter to teachers and convene information session, at which we’ll speak.
	+ Other.

***Cross-School Informational Webinar Agenda (if needed)***

* Introduction by [District Administrator].
* Toolkit demonstration.
* Overview of study.
* Next step: school-level meetings.

***School Staff Q&A Meeting Agenda (if needed)***

* Introduction by school principal.
* Overview of toolkit.
* Overview of study.
* Benefits and responsibilities of participation.
* Timeline.
* Q&A.
* Next steps.

**Appendix A4 – Text for Emails to Notify of Study Change**

**Follow up emails to announce change in study design to school or district leaders who had previously been interested but did not end up signing up.**

**[forwarding last communication, attaching FAQs and MOU; may be edited lightly to align to audience, context]**

**Subject: Important Updates to Writing Toolkit Study**

Dear [contact],

You may recall our earlier conversations about a study conducted by Abt Global and funded by the US Department of Education about evidence-based practices in writing. As I recall, [short summary of prior conversation, including reasons to be interested and any barriers to participation].

I’m pleased to report that we’ve brought your (and other school and district leaders’) concerns about study participation to the Department of Education. They’ve allowed us to make important changes to the research design to facilitate your participation.

***What’s changed?***

The study will no longer be a randomized controlled trial, where some study schools will not have immediate access to the Toolkit. Instead, all participating schools will now have access to the Toolkit and peer facilitator professional learning in spring 2025. Additionally, we’re now pleased to be able to provide all participating schools with $5,500 to express appreciation and defray any costs associated with participation. We have also adjusted incentive amounts for educators participating in data collection (see attached FAQs with more detail). The resulting study will focus on the implementation of the Toolkit: we will use the data we collect in your school to improve the Toolkit and provide guidance on how to implement it in schools across the country.

***What’s the same?***

Schools participating in the study will still have early access to the Secondary Writing Toolkit, which has been developed to help educators implement the evidence-based practices outlined in the Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively Practice Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/practiceguide/22>). The Toolkit itself has not changed: it includes resources to support teachers’ Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and use of evidence-based instructional strategies in their own classrooms. As part of this advance access, the study will provide professional learning to coaches or teachers, allowing them to serve as peer facilitators who lead the PLCs within [district]’s schools. Educators will also still participate in data collection.

**Will you consider being a part of this important work?**

We have attached an FAQs document and a Memorandum of Understanding with more detail on the study. *[Optional: We have also attached a sample of the Toolkit materials, so you can get a sense of whether they would be useful to your teachers.]*

[Closing drawn from another approved email to match respondent, appropriate next steps]

<Contact Name>

<Contact Role and information>

**Appendix A5 – Frequently Asked Questions**

**How was my school selected for this study?** The study team selected the state of [site] because the toolkit and evaluation activities directly address a need in [site] to increase English Language Arts (ELA) achievement, which includes a significant focus on writing.

**Does the [District] know about the study?** Yes. [District] supports this study and has approved the research plan. You can view the approval letter and learn more about the study at [REL Pacific website].

**What information is being collected from participants as part of this study?** Teachers and school administrators will participate in the study in the following ways:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Participants** | **Activity** | **Duration** | **Timing** |
| All participating teachers | Instructional log | 15 minutes per day for 5 days | 1 week in spring 2025 |
| Teachers (excluding peer facilitators) | Professional Learning Tracker (Survey) | 10–12 minutes 8 times | After each professional learning session |
| Peer facilitators | Professional Learning Tracker (Survey) | 25 minutes 8 times | After each professional learning session |
| Teachers and peer facilitators | Focus group | 60 minutes | Late spring 2025 |
| Administrators | Survey | 10 minutes | Late spring 2025 |

 **How will privacy and confidentiality of all data be ensured?** Information collected for this project comes under the confidentiality and data protection requirements of the Institute of Education Sciences (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183). The research team will store your completed surveys and interview records in locked filing cabinets and electronic files will be stored on password protected computers. The study team will replace personally identifiable information (PII) with study-specific identifiers immediately after receiving all data and all PII will then be destroyed. Abt will never include your name or your individual information in any report. Responses to this data collection will be used for statistical purposes only and responses will not be associatedwith a specific school or individual. Abt will report findings only at the district level and will name [District] as the district. Abt will not use your information for any other purpose than this study. Abt will destroy all data stored at Abt in 2031, five years after the end of the study, as required by the US Department of Education.

**How will REL Pacific express appreciation for and defray costs of my schools’ participation in the study?** Participating schools will receive $5,500 to express appreciation for schools’ willingness to participate and defray any costs associated with study participation.

**How will REL Pacific express appreciation for my participation in the study?** Teachers, peer facilitators, and administrators will each receive an incentive for participation in data collection activities. In total:

* Teachers who are not serving as peer facilitators may receive up to $350.
* Peer facilitators who are not teachers may receive up to $450.
* Teachers serving as peer facilitators may receive up to $550.

Incentive amounts will be distributed as detailed in the table below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Participants** | **Activity** | **Duration** | **Incentives Up To** |
| All participating teachers | Instructional log | 15 minutes per day for 5 days | $100**1** |
| Teachers (excluding peer facilitators) | Professional Learning Tracker (Survey) | 10–12 minutes 8 times | $100**1**  |
| Peer facilitators | Professional Learning Tracker (Survey) | 25 minutes 8 times | $300**1** |
| Teachers and peer facilitators | Focus group | 60 minutes | $150 |
| Administrators | Survey | 10 minutes | $75 |

1 Incentives for the instructional log and professional learning tracker will be prorated evenly on the number of days completed. Prorated incentive awards will be rounded up to the nearest $5.

Your incentive may come in the form of a gift card or, depending on district policy, another form. We may provide respondents with higher compensation values (over $200) with an option to receive compensation in the form of a check.

**What is the purpose of the study, and how will the results be used?** As you may appreciate, there is often a gap between knowing an education practice works for students and being able to use that practice in the complex, demanding world of schools. This toolkit is designed to make it easier for teachers to internalize evidence-based practices, and the study is designed to determine how well the toolkit works to change instruction and learning.We will use study findings to help other districts and schools—including but not limited to study schools—use these resources effectively.

**Who is conducting the study?** REL Pacific, a federally funded research and technical assistance organization, is developing and studying the toolkit. Our partners at WestEd developed the toolkit, and another organization (Abt Global) will study implementation.

**Who will get the study results?** The study results will be summarized across all study participants, and REL Pacific will develop a report of results for the federal Department of Education. These aggregated results will also be shared with participants and education leaders in your school and district. The report will be peer-reviewed and will be made publicly available through the Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES). The study findings will also be shared with the toolkit development partners, and the toolkit will be made publicly available on the IES website.

**Who can I contact if I have more questions or concerns about the study?** If you have general questions, you can contact Nicole Arshan. She is available by email (writingstudy@abtglobal.com) or by phone (301-347-5641). If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant, contact Abt’s Human Subjects Protection Committee (which is responsible for the protection of project participants) at 877-520-6835.

**Who can I contact if I have questions about the toolkit?** If you have questions about the toolkit, its content, or components, please contact Sheila Arens at REL Pacific by email at sarens@mcrel.org.

**Appendix A6 – Hawaii State Department of Education Research Approval Letter**

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