

**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.324

**Supporting Statement**

**Part A**

**National Center for Education Statistics**

**U.S. Department of Education**

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## **A.1 Circumstances Making Collection of Information Necessary**

### **A.1.1 Purpose of This Submission**

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS) program, conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education (ED), draws together information from multiple sources to provide rich, descriptive data on child development, early learning, and school progress. The ECLS program studies deliver national data on children's status at birth and at various points thereafter; children's transitions to non-parental care, early care and education programs, and school; and children's experiences and growth through the elementary grades. The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2023-24 (ECLS-K:2024) is the fourth cohort in the series of early childhood longitudinal studies that began with the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K) and continued with the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010-11 (ECLS-K:2011).<sup>1</sup>

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

The ECLS-K:2024 will provide data about the population of children who will be kindergartners in the 2023-24 school year.<sup>2</sup> The study will focus on children's early school experiences.<sup>3</sup> It is designed to provide data that can be used to analyze the relationships between a wide range of family, school, community, and individual variables and children's development, early learning, and performance in school. The study includes collection of data from parents,<sup>4</sup> teachers, and school administrators/principals,<sup>5</sup> as well as direct child assessments. Child surveys will also be administered in the third-grade round. While all of these components will be included in the study, the ECLS-K:2024 is designed such that the child will be the unit of analysis; the study will also be representative at the school and teacher levels at the kindergarten year. NCES contracted Westat to carry out the ECLS-K:2024 national data collections for any preschool through third-grade rounds, with the Educational Testing

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this submission, reference is made to the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99. For ease of presentation, it will be referred to as the ECLS-K. The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010-11 will be referred to as the ECLS-K:2011.

<sup>2</sup> Initial study design of the ECLS-K:2024 included a round of parent survey data collection in the spring prior to children's kindergarten year, known as the preschool round. While this spring round was referred to as the preschool round, the child sample would have included not only children in preschool or an early care and education (ECE) arrangement, but also those not in preschool or ECE. However, inclusion of the preschool national round was dependent on a successful test of assumptions in the preschool field test. In spring of 2021 following the analysis of the 2020 preschool field test, NCES determined that the field test experiences did not support the successful inclusion of a preschool national collection, and the study design was updated to make the fall kindergarten round the first national data collection. (For additional details on the preschool field test and the national preschool decision, please see OMB# 1850-0750 v.23.)

<sup>3</sup> The ECLS-K:2024 was originally designed to culminate with a fifth-grade data collection round. However, based upon study progress to date and resource constraints, in 2024 NCES made the decision to end the study instead at its third-grade round. Study materials continue to discuss rounds as "planned rounds" (or use similar language), to leave open possibilities for NCES to change the forthcoming study rounds.

<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of this submission, the term "parent" includes any parent, guardian, or adult in the household who is knowledgeable about the child's care, education, and health.

<sup>5</sup> The term school administrator and principal are used interchangeably throughout this submission.

Service (ETS) as the subcontractor developing the child assessments and Hager Sharp as the subcontractor developing selected respondent materials.

In preparation for the ECLS-K:2024 data collections, several OMB packages have been cleared or have been planned for submission. Prior to the field test collection of data from parents of preschool-aged children, in-person focus groups with parents of preschoolers and usability testing of the preschool parent survey instruments were conducted in 2019 (OMB 1850-0803 v.246 and OMB 1850-0803 v.253, respectively). The field test with preschool parents was conducted in the spring of 2020 (OMB 1850-0750 v.19). In order to test recruitment messages and materials for the field test and national data collections, online focus groups with school administrators were conducted in fall 2019 (OMB 1850-0803 v.255) and additional online focus groups were held with school administrators, teachers, and parents in spring 2020 (OMB 1850-0803 v.264). Additionally, usability testing of the kindergarten and first-grade (K-1) field test instruments was conducted in early 2021 (OMB 1850-0803 v.280). Focus groups with parents and teachers of kindergartners in order to refine the relevant respondent recruitment materials were held in early 2022 (OMB 1850-0803 v.309). A field test with kindergartners, first-graders, and second-graders, as well as their parents, teachers, and school administrators was conducted in the fall of 2022 (OMB 1850-0750 v.25).

Further, several previous OMB packages for ECLS-K:2024 data collections have been approved by OMB. The initial packages (OMB# 1850-0750 v. 24 and v. 26) passed through 60 and 30 days of public inspection and comment, and as appropriate subsequent packages have undergone 30 days of public review. The initial package is anticipated to have several revision requests (the April 2023 submission (v.27) being the first, followed by [September 2023 \(v.28\)](#), November 2023 (v.29), April 2024 (v.30), and August 2024 (v.31) submissions) to provide final versions of the study's instruments and respondent materials, revised in response to the kindergarten-first grade field test results and, for the spring kindergarten and spring first-grade rounds, fall kindergarten national data collection experiences. ~~A~~[If pilot testing or NCES determines a need for cognitive lab testing is of the third-grade adult survey measures, a package requesting permission to conduct the third-grade pilot testing prior to the currently-planned third-grade round, will be submitted in \[spring-fall 2025\]\(#\) \(under OMB# \[1850-0803, the series NCES uses for developmental work\]\(#\) \[1850-0750 v. 32\]\(#\)\).](#)

Previous revisions requests focused on the materials for the ECLS-K:2024 national kindergarten data collection activities, as well as transfer district and school recruitment.<sup>6</sup> There are two phases of the kindergarten data collection. The first, the fall kindergarten round, occurred from September through January 2024, followed by an additional round, the spring kindergarten round, which was conducted from March through June 2024. Data collection covered under the current clearance request (v.31) will then occur again in the spring of 2025, when most of the sampled students are in first grade. Prior to each of these data collection rounds are advance school contact periods, during which schools will be contacted to complete tasks in preparation for the upcoming in-person school visit.

In each data collection round, trained study field staff will visit the participating schools to conduct in-person, one-on-one child assessments. In addition, parents and primary classroom teachers of participating students will also be asked to complete web surveys in every round. Teachers will complete both teacher-level and child-level surveys. In the spring rounds, special education teachers and school administrators will also be asked to complete web surveys, with the teacher completing both teacher-level and child-level instruments.<sup>7</sup> In the fall 2023 and spring 2024 kindergarten rounds only, all primary

<sup>6</sup> Transfer schools refer to schools to which sampled children move after the fall 2023 kindergarten round. These schools, as well as the districts in which they are a part of, will be recruited into the study for future rounds of data collection.

<sup>7</sup> Paper surveys for school administrators and teachers will be made available for non-responders. Non-responding parents will be contacted by field staff to complete the survey via telephone or an in-person visit. Parents who remained as non-responders near the end of the spring 2024 kindergarten round received a 2-page paper survey containing critical questions. This abbreviated parent survey is also proposed for use in the

kindergarten teachers at participating schools, regardless of whether they teach sampled students, were asked to complete the teacher-level surveys about their backgrounds.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the survey activities occurring during the study's field periods, parents will be contacted between data collection rounds and asked to update their contact information on the study participants' website, MyECLS.ed.gov.

The current submission includes survey instruments, respondent materials, and specifications for the MyECLS website for the first-grade round, as well as ongoing recruitment of transfer districts and schools. Some of these materials were previously submitted in the request to conduct the K-1 field test (OMB# 1850-0750 v.24 and v.25). The instruments that were deployed in the fall 2023 kindergarten data collection were then updated to reflect additional NCES decisions and the tasks and procedures that will be followed for national data collections. A revision request, which primarily contained further updates to the fall kindergarten instruments and respondent materials, was approved in July 2023 (OMB# 1850-0750 v.27). The second November 2023 revision request focused primarily on changes to the spring kindergarten materials, including survey instruments and respondent materials, and was approved in February 2024 (OMB#1850-0750 v.29). A third revision request, submitted in April 2024 (OMB#1850-0750 v.30), contained changes to the spring first-grade instruments and respondent materials, in response to the national kindergarten field experiences. Changes relative to the initial October 2022 submission have been made to shorten the instruments, and item wordings have been revised to address respondent confusion or to reflect issues found as instruments are programmed for the web.

~~This revision request, submitted in August 2024, contained~~ further updates to the instrument and the study website specifications, as small changes were necessary once these instruments and website ~~are were~~ programmed beginning in spring 2024. Additionally, the August 2024 revision request ~~contains~~contained:

- the abbreviated paper parent survey for potential use with non-responders in the spring first-grade round;
- the Spanish translation of both the first-grade parent web specifications and the abbreviated parent survey;
- the paper versions of the first-grade school staff surveys;
- updates to first-grade respondent materials contained in Attachment A-2;
- the Spanish and Mandarin translations for the relevant spring 2025 parent materials contained in Attachment A-2;
- text describing changes to study protocols and data collection procedures, for example updated school newsletter distribution schedules and the elimination of height and weight measurements in the spring first-grade round;<sup>9</sup> and
- revisions to the race/ethnicity items in all of the first-grade survey instruments regardless of mode to be in line with the new federal statistical standard released on 3/28/24 (Statistical Policy

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spring 2025 first-grade round; a decision as to whether to administer this first-grade abbreviated parent survey to nonresponding parents will be made by NCES based upon field progress during that round of data collection.

<sup>8</sup> Only primary teachers of kindergarten teachers are included in this census of teachers that will complete teacher-level web surveys. Special education teachers of kindergartners, or other teachers of kindergartners such as art or gym teachers, are not included in this census.

<sup>9</sup> The ECLS-K:2024 was initially planned to include height and weight measurements on the study's subsample in the spring kindergarten, spring first-grade, and spring third-grade rounds. In early 2024 NCES reevaluated the core study components and decided to retain these measurements in only the spring kindergarten and spring third-grade rounds.

Directive No. 15: Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity (SPD 15).

As with the previous revision requests, [this-the August](#) submission ~~will~~[included](#) a 30D public comment period.

[The current change request, submitted in November 2024, is provided to update the study's data release timing and to revise text discussing any possible testing work and associated clearance packages prior to the study's national spring third-grade \(spring 2027\) round.](#)

### **A.1.2 Legislative Authorization**

The ECLS-K:2024 is authorized by law under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (20 U.S. Code Section 9543): *“The Statistics Center shall collect, report, analyze, and disseminate statistical data related to education in the United States and in other nations, including — (7) conducting longitudinal and special data collections necessary to report on the condition and progress of education.”*

### **A.1.3 Prior Related Studies**

The ECLS-K:2024 is part of a longitudinal studies program. The prior ECLS program studies collected data on three cohorts—the kindergarten classes of 1998-99 and 2010-11 cohorts and a birth cohort. Together these cohorts provide the range and breadth of data required to more fully describe and understand children’s education experiences, early learning, development, and health in the late 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s.

The ECLS-B, the birth cohort of the ECLS program, followed a national sample of children born in the year 2001, from birth through kindergarten entry. The ECLS-B focused on the characteristics of children and their families that influence children’s school readiness and first experiences with formal schooling, as well as children’s early health and in- and out-of-home experiences.

The ECLS kindergarten cohort studies followed nationally representative cohorts of children from kindergarten through eighth grade (1998-99 cohort, i.e., the ECLS-K) and fifth grade (2010-11 cohort, i.e., the ECLS-K:2011). For the ECLS-K, the base-year data were collected in the fall and spring of the 1998-99 school year, when the sampled children were in kindergarten. A total of 21,260 kindergartners throughout the nation participated by having a child assessment and/or parent interview conducted during that school year. Five more waves of data were collected: in fall and spring of the 1999-2000 school year when most, but not all, of the children who participated in the base year were in first grade; in the spring of the 2001-02 school year when most were in third grade; in the spring of the 2003-04 school year when most were in fifth grade; and in the spring of the 2006-07 school year when most were in eighth grade.

For the ECLS-K:2011, the base-year data were collected in the fall and spring of the 2010-11 school year, when the sampled children were in kindergarten. Approximately 18,200 kindergartners throughout the nation participated by having a child assessment and/or parent interview conducted during that school year. Seven more waves of data were collected: in fall and spring of the 2011-12 school year when most, but not all, of the children who participated in the base year were in first grade; in the fall and spring of the 2012-13 school year when most were in second grade; in the spring of the 2013-14 school year when most were in third grade; in the spring of the 2014-2015 school year when most were in the fourth grade; and in the spring of the 2015-16 school year when most were in fifth grade.

### **A.1.4 ECLS-K:2024 Study Design for the Kindergarten and First-Grade Data**



## Collections

The following section provides an overview of the planned study activities for the first three rounds of the study.<sup>10</sup> The data collection in these rounds will include direct child assessments and parent, primary and special education teacher, and school administrator surveys.<sup>11</sup> Part B contains more detail on these activities, as well as a discussion on the national sampling and recruitment and transfer district/school recruitment activities. Attachments A-1 and A-2 contain the respondent recruitment and communication materials;<sup>12</sup> A-3 contains the script from the respondent video; A-4 contains study informational PowerPoint slide decks for presentations to teachers and parents; A-5 contains infographics created from findings from previous ECLS, as well as other U.S. Department of Education, studies<sup>13</sup>; and A-6 contains the script from the student experience video which will be posted on the MyECLS landing page, as described in Attachment F. The data collection instruments described below appear in full in Attachments B-E. Attachment F contains details about the MyECLS respondent website; Attachment G contains matrixes summarizing the study items; and Attachment H contains a summary of the changes made to the kindergarten surveys since the field test version of these instruments were administered.

**District and School Recruitment.** Efforts to recruit sampled districts and schools for participation in the ECLS-K:2024 began in August 2022 and will continue through early 2024 to reach the target number of cooperating schools (district recruitment is described in OMB# 1850-0750 v.25).<sup>14</sup> States, school districts, and Catholic dioceses were sent a package via FedEx including a letter describing the study, the ECLS-K:2024 fact sheet, and the study-specific planned coronavirus safety protocols fact sheet. 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. Once districts and dioceses received these packages, the study’s school recruiters contacted the districts and dioceses via telephone and, when possible, obtained permission to contact schools within the district or diocese. Because some districts asked for a brief written summary of the study that could be shared with other decision-makers in the district, project staff prepared an Executive Summary that can be emailed to district contacts (see Attachment A-1). This summary may also be used in future rounds of the study, for example when recruiting a new school to which a sampled child has moved. Additionally, some districts had special approval and/or handling processes that had to be completed prior to a district-level decision. Study staff completed the necessary research applications, and recruiters followed up with districts to track the status of application submissions.

Once district (or, for Catholic schools, diocese) approval was secured,<sup>15</sup> principals at selected public and Catholic schools were sent a package via FedEx. Private non-Catholic schools were contacted directly; therefore, this package was sent to private schools at the beginning of the recruitment period, when district and Catholic diocese contacting was occurring. The package contained a letter describing the study, the ECLS-K:2024 fact sheet, and the coronavirus fact sheet. A sticker with the U.S. Department of

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<sup>10</sup> A subsequent data collection round is currently expected to occur when most of the students are in third grade (spring 2027). At this time, this third-grade round is planned as the final round of ECLS-K:2024 data collection. If NCES later decides to collect data in any additional ECLS-K:2024 rounds, OMB submissions seeking clearance for this will be submitted prior to the start of any field work.

<sup>11</sup> As noted earlier, the special education teacher and school administrator surveys will occur in the spring rounds only.

<sup>12</sup> These materials frequently refer the respondent to the MyECLS website. When the website is mentioned in electronic materials, it will be hyperlinked to take the respondent directly to the website when the link is clicked. When the website is referred to in printed materials, the address of the website will be spelled out for respondents (MyECLS.ed.gov).

<sup>13</sup> These infographics will be used on the MyECLS website as well as in various respondent materials. As respondent materials are printed or emailed, it will be determined which infographics most suit the respondent type or situation in which the materials are being used. Tables in Attachment A-5 specify when various infographics may be used in the respondent materials.

<sup>14</sup> While initial plans were for district and school recruitment to conclude in June 2023, the recruitment process through early 2023 provided evidence that a longer recruitment period would be necessary. District and school recruitment will continue throughout 2023 and into early 2024 to reach sample size goals.

<sup>15</sup> There may be districts that are notified about the study, but for which formal district approval is not received during the allotted recruitment period. In these cases, the schools will be contacted directly and informed that the district has been notified.

Education seal and the message, “Important information from the U.S. Department of Education.,” was included on the outside of packages. The enclosed letter displayed the name of the district-level approver, when available, to promote additional consideration of participation. School recruiters contacted the sampled schools via telephone to obtain principal approval for the school’s participation in the study. Once approval was obtained, recruiters began collection of school information to prepare for fall 2023 data collection logistics, including identifying a school coordinator to serve as the liaison for study activities in the school. As needed throughout the recruitment period, substitute districts and schools were contacted to replace non-responding or refusal districts and schools.

**Fall 2023 Kindergarten Data Collection.** The ECLS-K:2024 sampled a nationally representative sample of approximately 16,500 children enrolled in about 730 kindergarten programs in the 2023-24 school year. The sampled schools include public and private schools (both religious and nonreligious). See Part B for a full description of the national sample design. In the early fall 2023 advance school contact period, beginning in August, participating schools were contacted to provide a list of eligible children in their school (known as the “child list”) and to confirm the logistics for the days the field staff will be in the schools to conduct the child assessments (known as the “school visit” or “assessment visit” days). After the child list was received and children sampled from it for the study, school coordinators were mailed a package containing a welcome letter, an incentive check,<sup>16</sup> an updated coronavirus fact sheet,<sup>17</sup> and tips for encouraging respondent participation, as well as teacher and parent study packets for distribution. 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. Each of the parent packets contained a letter describing the study with login instructions to the MyECLS website, as well as a relevant fact sheet and the incentives. The teacher packets also contained a letter describing the study, a teacher-specific fact sheet, and an incentive check. Teachers were then emailed their MyECLS login credentials. The MyECLS website serves as the portal for school staff, teachers, and parents to provide contact information, parental consent, and to complete their web surveys. The MyECLS website’s functionality is more fully described in Part B; each screen from the website is contained in Attachment F.

Prior to conducting the child assessments, parental consent was obtained. Schools, or in some cases districts, determined whether to use explicit or implicit consent and whether to collect consent electronically via the MyECLS study website or to distribute paper consent forms. For explicit consent, each child’s parent needed to provide consent for their child to be assessed; children whose parents either returned the consent form noting that they declined their child’s participation or who did not submit their consent form (electronically or via paper) did not have their child assessed. For implicit consent, parental permission was assumed unless a parent opted his or her child out of the study (either via the electronic MyECLS form or a paper form). Regarding consent mode, schools had the option to choose electronic consent, but specify paper consent for particular parents, for example, if the school knew that some parents prefer paper communication or do not have Internet access. Additionally, paper consent forms could be requested by or offered to parents who did not complete the form electronically. If consent was to be collected on paper, paper consent forms, either explicit or implicit, were included in the parent packets. For paper consent forms, the school coordinator or team leader documented returned paper forms manually on MyECLS, and the child’s consent status was updated accordingly. School coordinators and

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<sup>16</sup> Please note that while this package uses the term “incentive,” in all respondent materials these will be described as “tokens of appreciation.” The school coordinator and teacher checks will be provided in these welcome packets, in the model of a prepaid incentive, as long as the district does not have rules prohibiting direct payment of school staff incentives. Parents will receive a \$15 Mastercard® in their welcome packet, along with a children’s book. See section A9 for complete details on the planned study incentives.

<sup>17</sup> The COVID-19 Protocols Overview was updated between the v.25 and v.26 submissions to reflect changing mitigation measures. See the revised version in Attachment A-1. This fact sheet will be included in the school coordinator mailing as needed.

study staff followed up with parents to obtain consent as needed. Attachment F contains the MyECLS electronic consent forms and A-1 contains the paper consent forms.

During the fall 2023 kindergarten data collection, direct child assessments were conducted with paper, tabletop easels and a laptop for study staff to record the children's responses. Parents of the sampled children and all of the kindergarten teachers in the school were invited to complete self-administrated web surveys. Primary teachers of the sampled children were also asked to complete a child-level survey for each of the sampled children in their classroom. There were hard-copy versions of the teacher surveys available upon request. Parents who did not respond to the web survey were contacted by field data collectors who attempted to conduct the survey with the parent over the telephone or, in some cases, in-person.

**Cognitive assessments.** As in prior cohorts of the ECLS program, direct cognitive assessments will be used in the ECLS-K:2024. The assessments measure the cognitive domains of reading and mathematics using age- and grade-appropriate items. During the fall 2023 kindergarten round, trained assessors administered the cognitive assessments directly to the sampled children on an individual basis. The assessor read each item and any relevant response categories to the child. The assessment items were displayed on paper, tabletop easels, with the item text and any relevant response categories and graphics displayed on the page facing the child. The back of the easel page, as well as the assessor's laptop, contained the item text and any relevant gesturing instructions. After the child provided a response, the assessor recorded the response in the laptop. All children were first administered a routing test for each measured domain. Performance on the routing test determined which one of the three second-stage tests was appropriate for the child's skill level. The assessments were untimed, although they were expected to last approximately 1 hour.

An executive function assessment of working memory was included in the cognitive assessment after the reading and mathematics items. Used in the ECLS-K:2011 as well, the assessment is a backwards digit span task that measures working memory and takes approximately three minutes to administer. The task was available in both English and Spanish. The number sequence appeared on the screen, the assessor presented the sequence to the child and asked the child to repeat the sequence backwards, and the assessor recorded into CAPI whether the child's response was correct or incorrect. Including an assessment of executive function will contribute to the ability to understand children's development and academic achievement.

Prior to beginning the reading and mathematics assessment, assessors administered the study's 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, which tests children's expressive vocabulary. Like the main reading and mathematics assessments, items were administered with an easel and the assessor entered responses into a laptop. The computer was used to record the child's responses; children who spoke English well enough 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 spoke Spanish were administered the English Basic Reading Skills (EBRS) items and Spanish mathematics assessment, followed by the Spanish executive function task.<sup>18</sup> 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 cognitive assessment concluded.

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<sup>18</sup> The English basic reading skills (EBRS) section, which measures such skills letter knowledge, letter sounds, and simple word reading, is composed of a small set of items from the main reading assessment. The EBRS was also included in the ECLS-K:2011.

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

**Parent surveys.** A self-administered web survey was administered to parents/guardians of the participating children in the fall 2023 round. Parent surveys were available in English and Spanish, with interpreters available for other languages. The parent surveys asked about family structure, kindergarten selection, early care and education arrangements, parental involvement with their child's school, household composition, and their child's health and well-being. Additionally, the survey asked parents to report on their family income, parent education levels, and other demographic indicators.

In early fall 2023, schools distributed study welcome packets to parents of sampled children. Included in the packet were unique login credentials for the MyECLS website, as well as a parent fact sheet, a \$15 Mastercard®, and a children's book.<sup>19</sup> Parents were asked to visit the MyECLS website to provide their contact information, consent for their child's participation, and to complete the parent web survey.

**Teacher surveys.** For the sampled kindergartners in the fall 2023 round, the primary teachers of participating children were asked to complete self-administered, web surveys. The primary teacher is the teacher who would be considered the child's regular classroom teacher, with whom the child spends the most time, and who is most familiar with the child's abilities. Each teacher of the sampled kindergartners were asked to complete both a teacher-level survey and child-level survey for each sampled child. The teacher-level surveys included questions about the teacher's own background and education, class materials, teaching practices, and specific information about the topics and skills taught in the classroom. The teachers were also asked to complete one child-level survey for each sampled child that they teach. The child-level surveys contained child-specific questions, such as ratings of the child's skills in the areas of language and literacy, mathematics, and executive functioning; children's social skills and behaviors; and information about program placements and special services that the child may receive.

While a large amount of teacher-level data will be collected through distributing surveys to the teachers of sampled students, this model is not sufficient in and of itself for a nationally representative sample of kindergarten teachers. The study's national representation of kindergarten teachers requires that each kindergarten teacher in the sampled schools has a non-zero chance of selection for each stage of sample selection. Thus, in the fall 2023 round, kindergarten teachers in participating schools who did not teach any sampled children were also asked to complete the teacher-level survey. Conducting a census of all kindergarten teachers in the sampled ECLS-K:2024 schools will produce the nationally representative teacher-level estimates not possible if only primary teachers of sampled children participated. In this design, teacher-level characteristics can be computed (e.g., percent of teachers with a specific training level).<sup>20</sup>

In early fall 2023, schools distributed study welcome packets to the kindergarten teachers, containing a letter describing the study, a teacher fact sheet, and a monetary incentive.<sup>21</sup> Teachers were emailed instructions for logging on to the MyECLS website to complete their web survey(s).

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<sup>19</sup> Results from the study's fall 2022 field test and resulting discussion among ECLS study staff and other experts at NCES suggested that the sticky note incentive may not be the best parent incentive for the national study. The study decided to offer a children's book as a parent incentive instead. In the fall kindergarten round, the schools were given a choice of three books and indicated which book they would prefer be sent to the sampled parents in their school. The book was then included in each parent welcome packet. An alternative book will then be included in the spring kindergarten- and first-grade parent welcome packets.

<sup>20</sup> The ECLS-K:2024 sample design also produces a nationally representative sample of schools educating students of kindergarten age during the 2023-24 school year.

<sup>21</sup> Teacher incentives were not included if the district or school prohibits direct incentive payments to school staff.

**Spring 2024 Kindergarten Data Collection.** In early 2024 during the advance school contact phase, school coordinators were contacted to remind them of the spring 2024 school visit dates.<sup>22</sup> In March 2024, school coordinators in schools that participated in the fall 2023 kindergarten round will again be contacted, notifying them of the availability of the sampled children’s information in the study website. They will be asked to review the information and note any updates, such as new kindergarten teachers or a child who has moved schools. School coordinators in schools that are new to the study—that is, the school was recruited too late to participate in the fall 2023 kindergarten round—were also contacted and asked to provide a child list for sampling purposes.

As in the fall 2023 round, school coordinators were mailed a package containing a welcome letter, an incentive check (if allowable by the district and school), and tips for encouraging respondent participation, as well as school staff and parent study packets for distribution. 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. Each of these packets contained letters describing the study as well as relevant fact sheets and MyECLS login instructions.<sup>23</sup> In addition, if parent consent status was missing from the fall of 2023 or was not collected because the school did not participate in the fall kindergarten round, parents were asked to provide consent for their child’s participation. School coordinators were asked to distribute the packets to the respondents.

ECLS-K:2024 staff subsequently contacted the school coordinators to confirm receipt of the welcome package and distribution of the teacher and parent packets, discussed this information and all updates, as well as again confirmed the school visit dates. If the school coordinator informed the field staff that a child moved to a new school, the school coordinator was asked to provide the child’s new school information.

As field staff learned of children who have left their original school to attend a different school,<sup>24</sup> the new district (if applicable) and school was recruited using the same procedures as districts and schools in the original sample.<sup>25</sup> If a transfer school was in a district that is already participating, that district was notified and the new school was recruited. If the child transferred to a school that is already participating in the study, that school was notified. In all cases, every effort was made to complete the cognitive assessment, and all other study activities, at the transfer school. Children who transfer from their originally-sampled school will be subsampled at fifty percent for follow-up in the data collections that occur after the spring 2024 round. Protected groups that are of analytic interest, which may include 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.<sup>26</sup> Children who move together into a destination school are not considered movers for the purpose of sampling.

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<sup>22</sup> Because district and school recruitment was ongoing through early 2024, some schools joined the study too late in the fall kindergarten field period to participate in that round. That is, a small number of schools did not begin data collection activities until the spring kindergarten round. In order to reflect the fact that the spring kindergarten round was their first time participating in the study, some respondent materials had two versions, 1 for respondents who participated in the fall kindergarten round and 1 version for those respondents who did not participate in the fall kindergarten round. See Attachment A-1 for these respondent materials.

<sup>23</sup> All school staff and parents, regardless of whether they participated in the fall 2023 round, received a new unique PIN to create an account on the MyECLS. This decision was made to reduce burden on previously-participating respondents (needing to remember their previously-used password, especially in the later years of the study) as well as to simplify distribution of PINs to respondents who did not participate in the previous round, either due to nonresponse or because they were not asked to complete a survey, for example a school administrator, a special education teacher, or a new primary teacher.

<sup>24</sup> Schools to which sampled children have moved are referred to as “transfer schools.” When four or more children transfer from one school to another school (all together), this school will be designated a “destination school.” As described in section A-9, transfer and destination schools have different incentive models.

<sup>25</sup> During the spring 2024 round transfer schools did not receive the school incentive. The school staff, including the SC regardless of the number of transfer students in the school, will receive incentives for their efforts. See section A-9 for a full description of the planned incentives.

<sup>26</sup> A subsample of schools was drawn in 2022 to participate in height and weight measurements of their sampled children. Children in this subsample will be followed with certainty.

During the spring 2024 kindergarten round, direct child assessments were again conducted with paper easels and a laptop for study staff to record the children's responses. Parents of the sampled children and all of the kindergarten teachers in the school were invited to complete self-administrated web surveys, as were special education teachers and school administrators. Primary and special education teachers of the sampled children were asked to complete a child-level survey for each of the sampled children that they taught in addition to the teacher-level survey that all kindergarten teachers were asked to complete. Hard-copy versions of the school staff surveys were available upon request. Parents who did not respond to the web survey were contacted by field data collectors who attempted to conduct the survey with the parent over the telephone or in-person. ECLS-K:2024 field staff worked with school coordinators to follow-up on missing consent or surveys. Towards the end of the field period, an abbreviated parent survey was distributed to non-responders after numerous reminders to complete the full web or telephone parent survey were sent. The items for the parent abbreviated survey for use in the spring kindergarten round were included as part of the April 2024 revision request (Attachment B-2b).

At the end of the spring kindergarten round, the ECLS-K:2024 had sampled a nationally representative sample of approximately 19,208 children enrolled in about 863 kindergarten programs in the 2023-24 school year.

***Cognitive assessments and other child activities.*** The cognitive assessments were conducted using the same procedures as used in the fall 2023 round. The reading and mathematics items remained the same as well, and the executive function task was again administered. Children were administered the language screener prior to the cognitive assessment, with the results dictating the administration of the same assessment portions as in the previous round. That is, depending on the results of the language screener, children either moved on to the English assessment, the Spanish assessment, or only the EBRIS items. At the conclusion of the cognitive assessment, assessors completed the Assessor Observation Scale for each child.

In 2022, a subsample of schools from the full ECLS-K:2024 national sample of schools was drawn to participate in height and weight measurements. Beginning in the spring 2024 kindergarten data collection, in the selected subsample schools, participating children had their height and weight measured, with the data recorded by the assessor on the laptop. The measurements occurred after the cognitive assessment and the executive function task. Parents of the children in the subsample were notified of this additional study component in their respondent materials. See Part B for more details on the height and weight subsample and measurements.

***Parent surveys.*** A self-administered, web survey was administered to parents/guardians of the participating children in the spring 2024 round. As in the fall 2023 kindergarten round, non-responding parents were contacted by field staff, typically by telephone, and reminded to complete the parent web survey. For continued non-responding parents, field staff attempted to complete the survey with the parent over the telephone, or in rare cases, during an in-home visit. An abbreviated paper survey was distributed to continued non-responding parents late in the field period, after previous reminder telephone calls and survey completion attempts were exhausted. Parent surveys were again available in English and Spanish, with interpreters available for other languages. While some items remained the same as used in the prior round, some new questions were added to the survey while others were removed. See Attachment B-2 for the spring 2024 parent survey items.

As in the previous round, parents were provided a welcome packet with a letter, parent fact sheet, \$15 Mastercard®, and a children's book. They were asked to visit the MyECLS website to update their contact information and to complete the spring 2024 parent web survey. Instructions for logging onto the website using their unique PIN to create an account were included in their welcome packets.

**Teacher surveys.** As in the fall 2023 round, all kindergarten teachers in the school were asked to complete teacher-level web surveys and primary teachers of sampled children were also asked to complete child-level surveys for those students.<sup>27</sup> Teachers received a spring 2024 welcome package reminding them of or introducing them to the study, with a fact sheet and incentive (if allowed by the district and school).

New to the spring 2024 round, the special education teachers or related service providers of sampled children who are receiving special education services were also be asked to complete web surveys about their background and qualifications in a teacher-level survey. They also were asked to answer questions about the types of services the ECLS-K:2024 children who have an IEP receive in a separate child-level web survey. The special education teachers also received welcome packets containing a letter, a teacher fact sheet, and an incentive (if allowed by the district and school). All eligible primary and special education teachers received an email with instructions for logging on to the MyECLS website. Non-responding primary and special education teachers were provided with paper surveys.

**School administrator surveys.** New to the spring 2024 round, the study included web-based school administrator surveys to be completed by school administrators and/or their designees in the participating schools. The instruments included a broad range of questions about the school setting, policies, and practices at both the school level and in kindergarten, as well as questions about the principal and the teaching staff. As with teachers and parents, school administrators received unique logins to the MyECLS website in order to gain access to their self-administered, web surveys. On the MyECLS website, the school administrators could review a document that provides an overview of the survey sections, each of which can be accessed separately from MyECLS. The school administrators were asked to personally complete the survey section on school administrator characteristics, but if they did not have the knowledge to respond to other survey sections, or if they did not have time to do so, they had the option to delegate these other survey sections to a designated school staff member. The school administrators were provided with a secondary MyECLS login to share with their designee, which the designee used to access the survey sections that the school administrator wanted the designee to complete. The designee did not have access to the school administrator characteristics section. The name and title of the person assigned the other sections (i.e., the designee) was recorded on the MyECLS website. Non-responding school administrators were provided with paper surveys.

**Spring 2025 First-Grade Data Collection.** In order to prepare for the spring 2025 data collection, when most of the sampled children will be in first grade, field staff will conduct advance school contact activities in the fall of 2024. School coordinators will be sent an email notifying them of the upcoming study activities. Field staff will follow-up with a telephone call to review the child information, identify children who have moved schools since the spring of 2024, and collect teacher information for the study children. A date for the spring school visit will also be set. School coordinators will be asked to distribute a postcard to parents of the sampled children, asking the parents to log on to the MyECLS website to update their contact information.

As children who have transferred to new schools are identified, the field staff will collect information about their new schools. The new districts (if applicable) and schools will then be recruited, using the same procedures as described above for the spring 2024 round.<sup>28</sup> As much as possible, recruitment of

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<sup>27</sup> The census of teachers is currently planned for administration in the fall 2023 and spring 2024 kindergarten rounds in originally-sampled schools. In transfer schools, only the primary teacher of sampled children, and special education teacher if applicable, will complete the teacher surveys.

<sup>28</sup> In the spring 2025 round transfer will not receive the school incentive. In the spring 2025 round, school coordinators in transfer schools with 4 or more sampled students will again receive a \$35 incentive; school coordinators in transfer schools with less than 4 sampled students will not receive the \$35 incentive. The decision was made to eliminate the incentives for school coordinators in transfer schools with less than four students beginning in the spring 2025 round, as the burden on school staff will be relatively low. Teachers and school administrators in all transfer schools will still receive incentives to recognize their time and effort in completing their surveys. See section A-9 for a full description of the planned incentives.

these transfer schools will occur in the fall of 2024. As transfer schools come on board, their school coordinators will be contacted by field staff to collect information about the school, the child(ren)'s teacher(s), and to set a spring 2025 school visit.

As was first considered and then implemented for the spring kindergarten round, NCES is considering the use of an abbreviated parent survey, pending an NCES decision to use it to collect data from full parent survey nonrespondents. If used, the abbreviated survey will be distributed to non-responders late in the field period after numerous survey completion attempts have been exhausted. The items for the parent abbreviated surveys for use in the spring kindergarten round were included as part of the October 2023 revision request submission; those for use in the spring first-grade English and Spanish parent abbreviated survey are included in the current revision request.

***Cognitive assessments and other child activities.*** The cognitive assessments will be conducted using many of the same procedures as used in the kindergarten rounds. The reading and mathematics pool of items will be updated to include more advanced items to avoid ceiling effects, and some of the easier items will be removed. The executive function task will again be administered after the cognitive assessment.<sup>29</sup> At the conclusion of the cognitive assessment, assessors will complete the Assessor Observation Scale for each child.

Prior to the cognitive assessment, the language screener will be administered to children who did not pass it in the spring 2024 round.<sup>30</sup> Children who do not pass the language screener again in spring 2025 will continue with the EBRS and, if Spanish-speaking, Spanish math assessment, and the Spanish executive function task. Children who do not pass the language screener but speak a language other than Spanish will move to the EBRS. Children who passed the language screener in the spring of 2024 (or in the fall of 2023 if no spring 2024 language screener score is available) will be administered some brief warm-up items to introduce them to the task before moving into the full cognitive assessment, and the executive function task.

***Parent surveys.*** A self-administered, web survey will be administered to parents/guardians of the participating children in the spring 2025 round. Parents will be invited to complete the survey on the MyECLS website, using a unique PIN distributed in their welcome package to access their survey. As in the kindergarten rounds, field staff will be assigned surveys of non-responding parents.<sup>31</sup> They will contact the parent to complete the survey, typically by telephone, or in rare cases, during an in-home visit.<sup>32</sup> If a non-responding parent indicates that they would prefer to complete the survey on the web when contacted by the field staff, the assigned field staffer will have the ability to reassign the case back to the parent for completion on the web. The field staffer will remind the parent how to access the survey online, using the PIN they were sent as part of the welcome package, to access their survey. Pending an NCES decision to collect data from full parent survey nonrespondents, abbreviated paper surveys may be distributed to continued non-responding parents late in the field period, after previous survey completion attempts have been exhausted. Parent surveys will again be available in English and Spanish, with

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<sup>29</sup> Vision evaluations were considered for the spring first-grade round, but ultimately NCES and potential co-sponsors decided against including this component.

<sup>30</sup> For children who did not complete an assessment in the spring kindergarten round, the language screener score for the fall kindergarten will be used to determine whether the screener will be administered again in the spring 2025 round.

<sup>31</sup> In previous rounds, field staff completed reminder telephone calls to non-responding parents, asking them to complete the survey online and answering questions. Continuing non-responders were then contacted later in the field period to complete the survey over the telephone. Because the reminder calls did not significantly help response rates in the base year rounds, NCES decided to eliminate the reminder calls. Instead, field staff will ask non-responding parents to complete the survey over the telephone (or in-person) in their first contact with the parent.

<sup>32</sup> Parents of children whose families have moved out of a sampled PSU, whose children are home-schooled, or who attend a school that refused to participate, will not receive the parent welcome package from a school coordinator as they are no longer associated with a participating school. These parents will instead be assigned to field staff at the beginning of the round and will be contacted by telephone to complete the survey, either on the phone or in-person with a field staffer. That is, they will not have access to the web survey unless they request it from the field staff. In those cases, the field staff will assign the case to the parent and provide the website link and PIN to be used to access the web survey.



interpreters available for other languages. While some items will remain the same as used in previous rounds, some new questions will be added to the survey while others will be removed. See Attachment B-3 for the first-grade parent survey items.

As in the previous rounds, parents will be provided a welcome packet with a letter, parent fact sheet, \$15 Mastercard®, and a children’s book. They will be asked to visit the MyECLS website to update their contact information and to complete the web survey. Parents will again be provided with a unique PIN to use when visiting the MyECLS website. In addition, if parent consent status was missing from the kindergarten rounds, parents will be asked to provide consent for their child’s participation.

**Teacher surveys.** As in the previous rounds, primary and special education first-grade teachers of sampled students will be asked to complete teacher-level web surveys and child-level web surveys for each sampled child that they teach.<sup>33</sup> They will receive a welcome package with information material about the study and incentive check (if permitted by the district and school). All teachers will be emailed instructions for logging on to the MyECLS website.

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 be repeating kindergarten or have moved on to a higher grade instead. These sampled children will remain in the study and will complete all study activities. Their teachers will also be asked to complete the teacher-level 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, for children who are in kindergarten in spring 2025 (or in another grade below first grade), there are some different questions for teachers of these children who are below grade. For example, the below-grade version of the spring 2025 teacher-level survey will ask about kindergarten classes taught rather than first-grade classes taught, and the child-level survey asks about skills appropriate for kindergarten rather than first grade.

**School administrator surveys.** The spring 2025 round will again include web-based school administrator surveys to be completed by school administrators and/or their designees in the participating schools. All administrators will receive an email with instructions for logging on to the MyECLS website. On the MyECLS website, the school administrators can again review a document that provides an overview of the survey sections. The school administrators will be asked to personally complete the survey section on their own characteristics, but if they do not have the knowledge to respond to items in the other sections, or if they do not have time to do so, they will have the option to delegate the other survey sections to a designated school staff member. The school administrators will be provided with a secondary MyECLS login for the designee to use to access the survey sections the school administrator assigns to their designee. The designee will not have access to the school administrator characteristics section. The name and title of the person assigned the other sections will be recorded on the MyECLS website.

## **A.2 Purpose and Uses of the Data**

The ECLS-K:2024 study will provide rich data that are designed to serve two purposes: descriptive and explanatory. The study will provide descriptive data related to: (1) children’s status prior to and at entry into kindergarten and at different points in children’s elementary school careers, (2) children’s transition into school and into the later elementary grade levels, and (3) children’s school progress in elementary school. Additionally, the study data will enable researchers to test hypotheses about how a wide range of child, family, school, classroom, education provider, and community characteristics relate to experiences and success in school.

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<sup>33</sup> The census of teachers is currently planned for administration in the fall 2023 and spring 2024 kindergarten rounds in originally-sampled schools. In subsequent rounds, only the primary and special education teachers of sampled children will be asked to complete web surveys.

In addition to the descriptive objectives mentioned above, the data will describe the diversity of young children with respect to demographic characteristics such as race/ethnicity, language, and school readiness. Such information is critical for establishing policies sensitive to this diversity. The longitudinal nature of the study will enable researchers to study cognitive, socioemotional, and physical growth, as well as relate trajectories of growth and change to variation in home and school experiences in the elementary grades. Ultimately, the ECLS-K:2024 data sets will be used by policymakers, educators, and researchers to consider the ways in which children are educated in our nation’s schools and to develop effective approaches to education. The data will be particularly valuable to policymakers, as the ECLS-K:2024 is being launched over a dozen years after ECLS-K:2011 and a quarter century after the ECLS-K. Analyses of the three cohorts will provide valuable information about the influences of changing policy and demographic environments on children’s early learning and development. Additionally, the study results will be especially meaningful, as they will provide important information about the experiences of children whose early lives were shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **A.2.1 Research Issues Addressed in the ECLS-K:2024**

Today’s early care and education environment differs from that of the past in numerous ways. In recent years, changes at the federal, state, school, family, and societal levels have affected students’ learning environments. These changes range from evolving federal education policy, increased attention and support for early learning, technological changes influencing how children learn, and demographic changes in student and family populations in the United States. The ECLS-K:2024 offers an opportunity to learn more about how families and schools respond to these changes. Exhibit A-1 shows examples of developments since the earlier ECLS program studies related to children’s learning environments that are relevant to the ECLS-K:2024.

The widespread use of the ECLS program data is a testament to their importance. Like the other ECLS studies, the ECLS-K:2024 will be an exceptionally valuable resource because it will collect measures of children’s cognitive growth and development in the context of the many school and family influences on children’s early lives.

#### **Exhibit A-1. Examples of developments since the earlier ECLS program studies relevant to the ECLS-K:2024**

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##### Policy changes

- Passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) 2015
- Passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act in 2017

##### Economic challenges

- State and local budget constraints and cuts
- Continued child poverty and food insecurity
- Growth in skilled jobs and demand for schools to prepare students for workforce

##### Changes in early childhood education–Birth to school-entry

- Increase in state-funded pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) programs
  - Improvements in quality and access from turn of the century until present, but access to high-quality early childhood education varies widely across states and communities
  - Quality rating and improvement systems for early care and education
  - Increased attention to the early childhood educator workforce
  - Increased emphasis on enhancing early learning opportunities and outcomes
  - Focus on decreasing the achievement gap through early intervention
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#### Changes in schools and challenges to schools

- Growth in preschool use and recognition of the importance of early childhood education for closing achievement gaps
- Increased access to full-day kindergarten
- Growth in school choice and increasing number of charter schools
- Continued growth in use of technology and the Internet in schools, including increased use of mobile devices, “bring your own device” policies, online assessments, and new methods of classroom interactions
- Blended or hybrid learning where in-person instruction and technology-delivered information are combined, especially in light of the coronavirus pandemic
- Differentiated instruction and personalized learning
- Training teachers to use technology effectively and to become online educators
- Growth of Hispanic, Asian, and multi-race child populations
- Growth in English language learners (ELL) in schools, especially at young ages
- Continued development of data systems to monitor student outcomes and make decisions

#### Child health and experiences

- Improvements in childhood lead exposure, but continued risk
  - Lower rates of teen pregnancy (and associated possible implications for maternal age of kindergartners)
  - Increase in infant breastfeeding
  - Increase in proportion of children who received a well-child checkup, but variation by subgroups
  - Continued problem of obesity and associated diabetes
  - Rise in incidence of allergies, autism, and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder
  - Increased number of homeless children and children in foster care
  - Increased childhood exposure to violence
  - Child disabilities related to the Zika virus
  - Increased parental substance abuse
  - Recent and continuing negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on child and family physical health (including long-term COVID and loss of children’s caregivers and relatives), mental health (anxiety, depression, and behavior problems), and home experiences (disruptions in routines, social isolation, and risk of child maltreatment)
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### **A.2.1.1 Developments in Early Education Policy**

A major change in early education occurred when, in 2015, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA maintains some of the same ideas as the 2002 reauthorization of ESEA, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), but includes more flexibility and decision-making at the state level resulting in state differences in schools’ goals, testing, interventions, and standards for academics and teacher qualifications. ESSA explicitly recognizes the importance of early learning from birth through third grade, allows Title I funds to be used for improving access to and quality of preschool programs, and allows Title III funds to provide professional development to teachers to improve instruction for English language learners from ages 3 and up. Title III also allows states to integrate early learning more fully into their state accountability and school improvement systems. In addition, ESSA includes a new Preschool Development Grant that focuses on providing more access to quality preschool education and the coordination of programs (Klein 2016).<sup>34</sup> The Preschool Development Grant supports state efforts to create high quality early childhood education programs that are aligned with K-12 programs and help low- and moderate-income children have better transitions to kindergarten (First Five Years Fund 2016). ESSA also includes new federal grants for Statewide Family Engagement Centers that focus on engaging parents and the community (Ujifusa and Tully 2016).

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<sup>34</sup> References for all publications cited in this document are provided at the end of the Supporting Statement Part C of this submission.

Other changes in federal policy, such as the 2017 “Tax Cuts and Jobs Act,” include the repeal of the former penalty in the Affordable Care Act for not having health insurance, the ability for families to use 529 college savings accounts to pay for private K-12 education, and the increase of the maximum Child Tax Credit to \$2,000 per child for some families, depending on income (Internal Revenue Service 2018; Society for Research in Child Development 2018). The ECLS K:2024 is an opportunity to obtain current data that may reflect these policy changes.

Until recently, economic data show a continued economic recovery from the deep recession that started over a decade ago. From 2015 to 2016, the poverty rate for children decreased from 19.7 to 18.0 percent (Semega, Fontenot, and Kollar 2017). Compared to previous years, more parents were employed and earning higher wages, more children have health insurance, and more students are graduating from high school (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2017). In addition, the number of families living in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty declined in 2016 for the first time in 20 years (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2018). However, economic disparity remains. In 2016, one in five children lived in poverty, some families lacked food, and there were inequalities among racial/ethnic groups in poverty levels and family structure (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2018). School funding has also not fully recovered and as of 2016, many schools had less general state funding than they had in 2008 (Ogletree and Robinson 2016). In addition, the pay gap between teachers and workers with comparable education levels has increased over time (Allegretto and Mishel 2016) and some teachers have been striking for higher wages. The ECLS-K:2024 data could be used to examine associated issues such as current school resources and how schools are meeting the needs of students and families.

The economic effects from the coronavirus pandemic are just beginning to be explored but are expected to impact the educational arena. For example, districts and schools may lose significant numbers of teachers—leading to increased classroom size and reduced resources—due to the economic downturn brought on by the pandemic. High levels of unemployment resulting from the coronavirus pandemic could affect family dynamics and resources. The ECLS-K:2024 study is in a unique position to collect data from schools and families during this time; the data could then be used to report on the early effects of the pandemic and its economic impact.

#### **A.2.1.2 Increased Attention and Support for Early Learning**

Educational policymakers and researchers continue to search for effective ways to promote school readiness. In the past decade, there has been a greater recognition of the potential for high-quality early learning experiences to help close the achievement gaps that already exist when students start kindergarten. Access to high-quality, state-funded preschool has increased across the more than two decades since the ECLS-K began in 1998, but there are wide differences among states in enrollment and program quality.

Other recent changes in early learning include increased access to full-day kindergarten, a proliferation of quality rating and improvement systems across states, and increased attention to improving teacher training and professionalism in the early childhood educator workforce. In addition, a growing number of schools and districts have implemented school-wide practices and policies for socioemotional learning, an area that research suggests has long-term impacts on positive youth development and educational attainment (Taylor et al. 2017). Research from the previous ECLS study cohorts further suggests that some areas of school readiness, such as teacher-rated child literacy and mathematics skills, may be improving (Bassok and Latham 2017). The ECLS-K:2024 can provide new evidence about school readiness to evaluate changes across time.

### **A.2.1.3 Technology and Learning**

Technological advances, improved Internet access, and the importance of technological proficiency in modern society are changing how and what students learn. Broadband Internet is now available in most classrooms, the price for technology is lower than in the past, and teachers are being trained to use technology before they begin teaching (U.S. Department of Education 2017). Teachers are using personalized learning to address individual students' needs, help students improve skills, and have experiences such as virtual field trips and interactions with other students around the world. Many schools also use blended or hybrid learning—the combination of in-person instruction and instruction provided virtually with the assistance of technology. A growing number of schools have a computer or tablet for each student and assess students online. However, there are inequalities in what technology resources communities have and challenges with implementation of technology (U.S. Department of Education 2017). This has become especially evident during the coronavirus pandemic. Access to wi-fi connections and computers or tablets is varied across districts and schools, which complicated the implementation of online learning that became necessary in the spring of 2020 in much of the country. While some schools were able to move seamlessly to teaching students virtually, other schools had a patchwork of resource availability, meaning that some students' learning ended when schools were closed due to the pandemic in the spring of 2020. The ECLS-K:2024 is designed to capture current uses of technology, support for teachers for the technology in their classes, and issues with technology implementation, all of which are especially relevant in this current age.

### **A.2.1.4 Demographic Changes**

The United States has been experiencing demographic shifts in its population, becoming an increasingly diverse society (Child Trends 2016; Colby and Ortman 2015). Growth in diversity was first seen in the U.S.'s population of children. In 2020, 50 percent of U.S. children were White, non-Hispanic; 26 percent were Hispanic; 14 percent were Black, non-Hispanic; 5 percent were Asian, non-Hispanic; and 5 percent were non-Hispanic "all other races." This trend is expected to continue, with the percentage of White, non-Hispanic estimated to decline to less than half of all children in 2030 (Child Trends 2021). The demographic shift is especially evident in the school-aged population. The percentage of public school students in the United States who were English language learners was higher in school year 2019-20 (10.4 percent, or an estimated 5.1 million students) than in 2010-11 (9.2 percent, or an estimated 4.5 million students) (U.S. Department of Education 2021). More recently, it has been reported that about a fourth of U.S. children speak a language other than English at home and live with at least one foreign-born parent (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2017).

English language use is not the only challenge for many of these children, particularly those born outside the United States. Many children, especially those with parents from Mexico and Central America, come from households with parents with a lower level of education, larger families, and lower family income than their native-born peers (Grieco et al. 2012; Larsen 2004). However, households with parents born in foreign countries are more likely than those with parents born in the U.S. to be headed by married couples (Grieco et al. 2012). Also, families with different cultural backgrounds and from other countries may have different normative expectations for how they should interact with schools and teachers. The ECLS-K:2024 will enable researchers to examine how schools and teachers are meeting the needs of these students and their families and to measure the effectiveness of the efforts of schools to educate all students.

## **A.3 Use of Improved Information Technology**

### **A.3.1 Web-Based Surveys**

The ECLS-K:2024 will employ web surveys to collect data from schools, teachers, and parents. The use of technology is pervasive in education today. Parents of sampled students are likely to be brought up within an environment of digital technology (making them “digital natives”) and will expect an option to communicate electronically. Such parents are increasingly unlikely to spend time completing a survey on paper or with an interviewer via telephone. Additionally, many of the school personnel in sampled schools will also be familiar with using online methods of communication. By offering a web survey for adult respondents, the ECLS-K:2024 will provide flexibility for respondents to choose both when to participate and using a mode that they are likely most comfortable engaging with. This is especially important for the ECLS-K:2024’s participating school staff, where the school-based data collection is packed into an increasingly challenging school schedule.

Finally, web surveys have usability advantages over paper forms, including that the resulting survey data are expected to require less quality review and editing by ECLS-K:2024 staff. Response rates ranging from 45 percent to 96 percent have been achieved on NCES studies that have been developed for or transitioned to web-based data collection, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the International Early Learning Study (IELS), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). The response rates provided here for the web mode are consistently higher than the response rates for paper or interviewer modes for the same study. Similarly, web-based surveys may have some advantages over telephone interviewing. Specifically, they may eliminate interviewer effects and reduce social desirability bias. While it is expected that most respondents will choose to complete the web version of the instruments, paper versions of the school staff surveys will be provided to respondents who do not respond to the web-based activities, or to those who request them. For parents who choose not to respond on the web, field data collectors will conduct the survey via telephone or in rare instances, in-person. Continued non-responding parents may also receive abbreviated paper surveys.

## **A.4 Efforts to Identify Duplication**

The ECLS-K:2024 will not be duplicative of other studies. The ECLS-K and the ECLS-K:2011 are the only other studies to collect as detailed and extensive information as the ECLS-K:2024 for a cohort of young children and to follow them throughout elementary school. The ECLS-K:2024 extends the information obtained by the ECLS-K and the ECLS-K:2011 to a new cohort, opens up possibilities to investigate new research questions, and allows important comparisons to be made between three kindergarten cohorts attending school over a period of more than 25 years.

Other studies contain similar components of the ECLS-K:2024 but differ in study design. For example, in terms of the parent survey, the National Household Education Surveys (NHES) program surveys cover similar topics, including early care and education, early childhood school readiness, before- and after-school care options, and parent and family involvement in education; however, these studies are cross-sectional and do not provide longitudinal data. As another example, the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES), which is similar to the ECLS-K:2024 in terms of the content and respondents included (e.g., children, parents, teachers, and center directors, who could be considered similar to school administrators), has followed several cohorts of children from preschool through early elementary school, with its newest cohort being conducted from 2019 through 2022. However, the FACES samples are limited to children served by the Head Start program. The ECLS-B was a longitudinal study that followed a cohort of children from approximately 9 months old (2001-02) through the start of kindergarten that collected data from the children and the children’s parents, their early care

and education providers, and in the kindergarten rounds their teachers. However, the ECLS-B did not continue data collections through the elementary grades. The Middle Grades Longitudinal Study of 2017–18 (MGLS:2017) focuses on similar components (e.g., children and their parents, teachers, and school administrators) and development outcome areas to the ECLS program studies, but for a cohort of middle grades students, rather than kindergartners. The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, which ran from 1991 through 2007, included similar study components (e.g., children and their parents, teachers, and school administrators) to collect data on child development outcome areas (social, emotional, intellectual, and language development; health; and physical growth). However, the NICHD sample was recruited from hospitals shortly after the birth of the children and the study’s main focus was on early child care, including maternal care and the relationship between that care and children’s developmental outcomes. No new cohorts are currently planned for the NICHD study. Within the United States, the International Early Learning Study (IELS) conducted in the fall of 2018 focused on 5-year-olds enrolled in kindergarten and also included similar study components (e.g., students, their parents, teachers, and school administrators) to collect data on child development outcome areas. However, the IELS was not representative of all kindergartners and was not longitudinal in nature.

## **A.5 Burden on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities**

The ECLS-K:2024 does not involve data collection from small businesses or entities.<sup>35</sup> The same is true of the recruitment activities of new schools to which sampled children have transferred, discussed in this submission. Burden for all respondents (i.e., children, parents, teachers, and school administrators) will be minimized wherever possible; for example, the recruitment letters and study materials are designed to be clear, brief, and informative.

## **A.6 Frequency of Data Collection**

This submission describes the ECLS-K:2024 national data collection for the first three rounds of the study: fall 2023 and spring 2024 when the sampled children are in kindergarten,<sup>36</sup> and spring 2025 when most of the sampled children will be in first grade.

A future round of the ECLS-K:2024 is planned for spring 2027, when most of the children will be in third grade. ~~It is currently expected that this round will be preceded by a pilot~~The third-grade round may be preceded by cognitive laboratory testing for the adult measures; if NCES determines a need for this work, ~~for which~~ a future OMB clearance request for the tests will be submitted. Collecting ECLS-K:2024 data less frequently would impede the longitudinal analyses that are the primary goal of this study.

## **A.7 Special Circumstances of Data Collection**

No special circumstances for this information collection are anticipated.

In March 2024, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) announced revisions to Statistical Policy Directive No. 15: Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity (SPD 15) and published the revised SPD15 standard in the Federal Register (89 FR 22182). The current August 2024 revision request includes the new federal statistical standard for race/ethnicity items in the spring first-grade surveys. NCES is currently working on its action plan for compliance with the newly revised SPD 15 standards, and early discussions suggest that implementation of these standards will be particularly complex and delicate in data collections where race and ethnicity data is reported both

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<sup>35</sup> Note that some private or charter schools could be considered small businesses, but these types of schools are not expected to have any additional burden beyond what is asked of public schools. In addition, due to the voluntary nature of the study, they are able to decline participation.

<sup>36</sup> Sampled children may also be in transitional kindergartens or pre-kindergarten.

by individuals about themselves and also provided by third parties (e.g., school administrators about their teachers, teachers about their students). Compliance for the ECLS-K:2024 spring first-grade round involved revising multiple race/ethnicity items – e.g., adult self-reports, adult reports of others, school reports of the school composition, teacher reports of the classroom composition, field staff collection of school reports of sampled children.

Per the March 2024 updated Statistical Policy Directive No. 15, agencies are required to collect detailed race and ethnicity categories unless an exemption is sought. Beginning in the spring first-grade round, the ECLS-K:2024 will collect these detailed race and ethnicity categories for all adult self-reports and for parent reports of their children. To collect self-reported race/ethnicity from teachers and school administrators, the ECLS-K:2024 will use Figure 1 of the Standard for paper administration, and Figure 2 of the Standard followed by questions collecting the detailed categories for web administration. To collect parents' self-reported race/ethnicity as well as their reports of their child's race/ethnicity, the ECLS-K:2024 will use Figure 3 of the Standard followed by questions collecting the detailed categories for both web and phone/in person administrations. Figure 3 is proposed for parents as reading the longer Figure 2 in phone administration is not advised, and the study would like to use the same initial item in both phone and web administration to guard against mode effects.

For proxy reports of race/ethnicity (e.g., parent reports of the race/ethnicity of other adults in the household), pending approval by OIRA with this clearance package, the ECLS-K:2024 will collect just the minimum reporting categories (via Figure 3 of the Standard), due to concerns about the validity of more detailed reporting by proxies.

For proxy aggregate reports of race/ethnicity, specifically those by school administrators and teachers who will likely have access only to student race/ethnicity information collected under the old standards, the ECLS-K:2024 will continue to use race and ethnicity categories as described in the 1997 SPD 15 and as administered in prior ECLS collections, per an agreement between NCES senior leadership and OMB. Please see Attachments C6a, C6b, E3a, E2b, and E2c. Because these reports are aggregate by schools, NCES is reliant on the ability of those third-party record keepers to report their data in compliance with SPD 15 and it is not yet expected that schools will be able to reliably report these data using the 2024 SPD 15 revision by the spring 2025 ECLS-K:2024 data collection. Because study experts believe the school and teacher respondents are unlikely to have these data available to them reported in accordance with the 2024 SPD 15 revision, asking an item that uses the revised categories would affect respondent burden and accuracy of reports. Data accuracy and validity would also likely be affected because the totals will not sum to the total number of students, which serves as a quality control check on the collected data. Overall, it is expected that this type of reporting would be nonintuitive at least at this point of the study and is ill advised without testing of these items with the ECLS populations. If future testing supports an alternative model for these items, the ECLS-K:2024 will consider such alternative items in later data collections. NCES continues to discuss these items and updated items will be presented in the next OMB package submitted after NCES senior management directs a change in this agreement with OMB.

## **A.8 Consultants Outside the Agency**

NCES consulted with a range of outside agencies for the ECLS program kindergarten cohort studies. Consultations for the previous studies as well as for the ECLS-K:2024 have and will continue to inform the ECLS-K:2024 study design and instrumentation. During the early development of the ECLS-K and ECLS-K:2011, study staff met with representatives from a wide range of federal agencies with an interest in the care and well-being of children (see Table A-1). The goal of these activities was to identify policy



and research issues and data needs. Similarly, consultation with federal agencies occurred for the ECLS-K:2024 (see table A-1), including, for example, with colleagues in the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Endowment for the Arts. Historically in the ECLS program, consultations with government agencies resulted in interagency agreements funding questions, sections of or full study instruments, and components of the child assessments (specifically, the hearing evaluations in the ECLS-K:2011). Federal agency partners will continue to be consulted during the span of the study.

Similar to its predecessors, the ECLS-K:2024 represents a collaborative effort by education and health and human services agencies. NCES supports the development of the core design of the ECLS-K:2024. Partner agencies supporting the inclusion of the supplemental questions or sections of the study instruments that will enrich the ECLS-K:2024 by providing expert input and/or funding have included: the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER), the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), and the National Center for Education Research (NCER) in the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education (ED); the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA); the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration in DHHS; and the National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD), the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the National Eye Institute (NEI), and the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), all at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in DHHS. Table A-1 lists the federal agency consultants for the ECLS-K, ECLS-K:2011, and ECLS-K:2024 and table A-2 lists other organization consultants for the ECLS-K:2024.

Table A-1. Federal agency consultants for ECLS-K, ECLS-K:2011, and ECLS-K:2024

Katrina Baum <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics	Tim D’Emillio U.S. Department of Education OELA
Michael Planty, Jenna Truman U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics	Christy Kavulic, Meredith A. Miceli U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs
William Murphy, Christa Themann Centers for Disease Control National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health	Cathie L. Martin <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education OIE
Diane Schilder <sup>1</sup> Government Accounting Office	Scott Brown, <sup>1</sup> Louis Danielson, <sup>1</sup> Glinda Hill, <sup>1</sup> Lisa Holden-Pitt, <sup>1</sup> Kristen Lauer, <sup>1</sup> Marlene Simon-Burroughs, <sup>1</sup> Larry Wexler
Cindy Prince, <sup>1</sup> Emily Wurtz <sup>1</sup> National Education Goals Panel	U.S. Department of Education OSEP
Tom Bradshaw, <sup>1</sup> Doug Herbert, <sup>1</sup> Sunil Iyengar, Melissa Menzer National Endowment for the Arts	Lisa A. Gorove <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education OUS, Budget Service, ESVA
Jeffrey Thomas <sup>1</sup> National Endowment for the Humanities	Elois Scott <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education OUS, PES, ESED
Andy Hartman <sup>1</sup>	Richard Dean <sup>1</sup>

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National Institute for Literacy

Mary Queitzsch,<sup>1</sup> Larry Suter<sup>1</sup>

National Science Foundation

Michael Ruffner,<sup>1</sup> Bayla White,<sup>1</sup>

Brian Harris-Kojetin<sup>1</sup>

Office of Management and Budget

Margaret Applebaum, Barbara Murphy, John

Endahl,<sup>1</sup> Joanne Guthrie, Jeff Wilde<sup>1</sup>

Victor Oliviera,<sup>1</sup> Mark Nord, Alisha Coleman-

Jensen, Matthew P. Rabbitt

U.S. Department of Agriculture

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U.S. Department of Education

OVAE, Adult Literacy

Ivelisse Martinez-Beck, Pia Divine,<sup>1</sup> Esther

Kresh,<sup>1</sup> Ann Rivera

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Administration for Children, Youth, and Families

Gerry Hendershot,<sup>1</sup> John Kiley,<sup>1</sup> Michael Kogan,<sup>1</sup>

Mitchell Loeb, Patricia Pastor

U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

National Center for Health Statistics

Table A-1. Federal agency consultants for ECLS-K, ECLS-K:2011, and ECLS-K:2024—Continued

Don Hernandez <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census Marriage and Family Statistics	Mary Frances Cotch U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services National Eye Institute, National Institutes of Health
Anika Schenck-Fontaine, Jessica Jones U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration Maternal and Child Health Bureau	Christine Bachrach, <sup>1</sup> Jeff Evans, <sup>1</sup> Sarah Friedman, <sup>1</sup> Peggy McCardle <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services NICHD, Center for Population Research
Naomi Karp, <sup>1</sup> Dave Malouf, <sup>1</sup> Ivor Pritchard, <sup>1</sup> Marsha Silverberg <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education IES	Regina Bures, Jim Griffin U.S. Department of Health and Human Services NICHD, National Institutes of Health
Lauren Angelo, Jon Jacobson U.S. Department of Education IES, NCEE	Howard Hoffman U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, National Institutes of Health
Jacquelyn Buckley U.S. Department of Education IES, NCSER	Martha Moorehouse, <sup>1</sup> Anne Wolf <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Assistant Secretary for Planning & Evaluation, Children and Youth Policy
Caroline Ebanks U.S. Department of Education IES, NCER	
Patricia McKee U.S. Department of Education OESE Compensatory Education Programs	

<sup>1</sup> Consultant for the ECLS-K only. All other consultants provided input on one or both of the most recent ECLS program kindergarten cohort studies, the ECLS-K:2011 and ECLS-K:2024.

NOTE: Affiliation listed is the affiliation at the time input on the study was provided.

ECLS study staff have also consulted several other organizations (see table A-2) that have an interest in the care, well-being, and education of young children. The goal of such consultations is to obtain additional perspectives on policy and research issues and data needs. While most of this consultation occurred during the design and conduct of the ECLS-K and ECLS-K:2011, there has also been such consultation during the design of the ECLS-K:2024. For example, ECLS study staff have consulted with staff involved with the Early Learning Network, a network funded by IES and located within the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families & Schools at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. As another example, faculty at various universities (e.g., Boston University's Wheelock College of Education & Human Development, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) with areas of expertise in selected topical areas including the instruments were consulted during item development.

Table A-2. Other organization consultants for ECLS-K, ECLS-K:2011, and the ECLS-K:2024

Lynson Bobo Project Associate Resource Center on Educational Equity Council of Chief State School Officers	Keith W. Mielkek Children’s Television Workshop
Susan Bredekamp, Barbara Willer National Association for the Education of Young Children	June Million, Sally McConnell, Louanne Wheeler National Association of Elementary School Principals
Jane Clarenbach National Association for Gifted Children	Evelyn Moore, Erica Tollett National Black Child Development Institute
Mary Jo Lynch American Library Association Office of Research and Statistics	Thomas Schultz Director, Center for Education Services for Young Learners National Association of State Boards of Education
	Larry Suter Independent Education Consultant, Formerly of NSF and NCES

NOTE: Affiliation listed is the affiliation at the time input on the study was provided. Italicized text used for consultation that occurred for the ECLS-K:2011. All other consultations occurred for the ECLS-K.

In preparation for the early rounds of ECLS-K:2024 data collection, Westat assembled expert panels (one Technical Review Panel (TRP) and two Content Review Panels (CRP)) to review and comment on issues related to the development of the study and survey instruments. The members of the panels included experts in research, policy making, and practice in the fields of early childhood education and development; elementary education; parenting and children’s learning; children’s language, literacy, and mathematics development in the home context; research methodology; special populations; and assessment. ~~Additional expert panels will be assembled to provide input throughout the course of the study.~~

Table A-3 lists the ECLS-K:2024 TRP members that participated in a 2-day meeting held in April 2019. The meeting focused on the design of the preschool, kindergarten, and first-grade rounds of the ECLS-K:2024, although input on later rounds was also provided.<sup>37</sup> Panel members recommended study constructs and specific items for the parent, teacher, and school administrator surveys, and provided guidance on the child assessments.

<sup>37</sup> Initial study design of the ECLS-K:2024 included a round of parent survey data collection in the spring prior to children’s kindergarten year, known as the preschool round. However, inclusion of the preschool national round was dependent on a successful test of assumptions in the preschool field test. In spring of 2021 following the analysis of the 2020 preschool field test, NCES determined that the field test experiences did not support the successful inclusion of a preschool national collection, and the study design was updated to make the fall kindergarten round the first national data collection. (For additional details on the preschool field test and the national preschool decision, please see OMB# 1850-0750 v.23.)

Table A-3. ECLS-K:2024 TRP members for April 2019 meeting

Daphna Bassok, Ph.D. University of Virginia	Rolf Grafwallner, Ph.D. Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) and The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
Karen Bierman, Ph.D. The Pennsylvania State University	Stephanie Jones, Ph.D. Harvard Graduate School of Education
Robert Crosnoe, Ph.D. The University of Texas at Austin	Megan McClelland, Ph.D. Oregon State University
Douglas Downey, Ph.D. The Ohio State University	Paul Morgan, Ph.D. The Pennsylvania State University
Linda M. Espinosa, Ph.D. University of Missouri – Columbia	Lynne Vernon-Feagans, Ph.D. The Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

NOTE: Affiliation listed is the affiliation at the time input on the study was provided.

In addition, two virtual CRP meetings were held, gathering experts for more targeted discussions. The first CRP meeting was held on May 22, 2019. This meeting was about the preschool parent survey and panelists provided input on which constructs and measures should be prioritized for that round of the study. The second CRP meeting was held in two parts, with reading experts convening on June 13, 2019 and math experts on June 14, 2019. These two meetings contained discussion on the direct and indirect child assessments and panelists provided input on the assessment specifications and items to be included in the kindergarten and first-grade rounds of the study. Table A-4 lists the ECLS-K:2024 CRP members.

Table A-4. ECLS-K:2024 CRP #1 (preschool parent survey) and CRP #2 (child assessments) member list

Preschool parent survey panel	Child assessments panel
Heather Bachman University of Pittsburgh	Carol Connor University of California, Irvine
Stephanie Curenton Boston University	Lizanne DeStefano <sup>2</sup> University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Vivian L. Gadsden University of Pennsylvania	Doug Frye <sup>2</sup> University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education
Mariela Páez Boston College	Donna Hafner <sup>2</sup> Independent consultant, assessment development, math facilitator, elementary teacher
	Alba Ortiz <sup>1</sup> University of Texas at Austin
	Julie Sarama <sup>2</sup> University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education
	Rebecca Silverman <sup>1</sup> Stanford University
	Barbara Wasik <sup>1</sup> Temple University

<sup>1</sup> Reading CRP

<sup>2</sup> Mathematics CRP

NOTE: Affiliation listed is the affiliation at the time input on the study was provided.

## A.9 Provision of Payments or Gifts

Obtaining high response rates is critical for all longitudinal studies. At the start of a longitudinal data collection, it is essential to establish the good will of respondents and to demonstrate that their participation in the study is valued. While good will can be established by using well-designed respondent materials that inform respondents about the goals of the study and their role in it, the field staff establishing a rapport with the respondents, and professionalism among the field staff, incentives play a large role as well.

As seen on other NCES studies such as the MGLS:2017, response rates across education-centric studies have dropped since data from the last cohort of the ECLS were collected. Perceived burden on their staff, parents, and students will be one of the most critical factors considered as school administrators consider participation in the study. By offering both monetary and non-monetary incentives, the ECLS-K:2024 recognizes respondents' commitment to the multi-year study and any associated burden. The study's incentive plan builds on the successful incentive strategies employed by other NCES studies, including the ECLS-K:2011.

A review of the literature supports the need for incentives, especially monetary incentives. Singer and Ye (2013) concluded that, "incentives increase response rates to surveys in all modes, including the web, and in cross-sectional and panel studies" and that, "monetary incentives increase response rates more than

gifts, and prepaid incentives increase them more than promised incentives....” More recently, Mercer et al. (2015) reviewed both published and unpublished research pertaining to incentives from the preceding 21 years and concluded that in mail and telephone surveys, “consistent with prior research, the analysis found that prepaid incentives are more effective than promised incentives” (web surveys were not included in the review). See section A.9.5.1 below for additional literature reviews regarding the use of incentives.

Monetary and non-monetary incentives were provided to respondents in the fall 2022 K-1 field test. Additionally, to deepen understanding of participants’ perspectives on the study experience in general, the ECLS-K:2024 included an area on the MyECLS website for the fall 2022 K-1 field test participants to provide feedback about their study experiences. Included were targeted questions to solicit opinions on the study’s use of monetary and non-monetary incentives, as well as the amount of the incentive payments. The K-1 field test results and feedback survey data were important in determining the final incentive model for the national ECLS-K:2024 rounds.

The same monetary and non-monetary incentives as used in the K-1 field test are proposed for the national kindergarten and first-grade rounds along with some new ideas which arose from field test results, initial national recruitment efforts, and subsequent discussions by ECLS program staff and NCES experts.

Table A-5 displays the monetary and non-monetary incentives NCES proposes to provide to the ECLS-K:2024 sample members in the kindergarten and first-grade rounds, along with the monetary incentives offered in the K-1 field test and the ECLS-K:2011 for comparison. During the national district and school recruitment phase, district and school personnel were informed of the incentives that will be offered to schools and school staff for their participation during the data collection rounds. More details about these incentives are described in the sections below.

Table A-5. ECLS-K:2024 and ECLS-K:2011 national kindergarten and first-grade respondent incentives, by round

Respondent Type	ECLS-K:2024 Monetary Incentive	ECLS-K:2024 Non-Monetary Incentive <sup>1</sup>	ECLS-K:2024 K-1 Field Test Monetary and Non-Monetary Incentives	ECLS-K:2011 Monetary and Non-Monetary Incentives <sup>2</sup>
Schools	(Separate incentive not planned for fall kindergarten round)	For schools with explicit consent and 100 percent returned forms: Food event at school (e.g., pizza party or movie night) sponsored by the study (fall kindergarten round)	\$10 per participating child (check at the conclusion of the field test)	\$200 (check at the conclusion of the spring kindergarten round)
	\$300; or \$250 and magazine subscription(s) (all incentives provided at the conclusion of the spring kindergarten round) <sup>3</sup>	Certificate of Contribution signed by the NCES Commissioner (at the conclusion of the spring kindergarten round) <sup>5</sup>	For schools with explicit consent and 100 percent returned forms: Food event at school (e.g., pizza, bagels, or ice cream party) sponsored by the study	\$200 (check at the conclusion of the spring first-grade round) <sup>4</sup>
	\$300; or \$250 and magazine subscription(s) (all incentives provided at the conclusion of the spring first-grade round) <sup>4</sup>		Certificate of Contribution signed by the NCES Commissioner (at the conclusion of the field test)	



Table A-5. ECLS-K:2024 and ECLS-K:2011 national kindergarten and first-grade respondent incentives, by round—Continued

Respondent Type	ECLS-K:2024 Monetary Incentive	ECLS-K:2024 Non-Monetary Incentive	ECLS-K:2024 K-1 Field Test Monetary and Non-Monetary Incentives	ECLS-K:2011 Monetary and Non-Monetary Incentives
School Coordinators	\$65 (check with the welcome letter in the fall kindergarten round)  \$35 (check with the welcome letter in the spring kindergarten round) <sup>6</sup>  \$35 (check with the welcome letter in the spring first-grade round) <sup>4</sup>	Certificate of Contribution signed by the NCES Commissioner (at the conclusion of the spring kindergarten and first-grade rounds) <sup>5</sup>	\$65 (check with the welcome letter)  Certificate of Contribution signed by the NCES Commissioner (at the conclusion of the field test)	\$25 (check with the welcome letter in the fall kindergarten round)  \$25 (check with the welcome letter in the spring kindergarten round)  \$25 (check with the welcome letter in the spring first-grade round)
School Administrators	(Data are not collected from school administrators in fall kindergarten round)  \$25 (check with the welcome letter in the spring kindergarten round)  \$25 (check with the welcome letter in the spring first-grade round)	Certificate of Contribution signed by the NCES Commissioner (at the conclusion of the spring kindergarten and first-grade rounds) <sup>5</sup>  Periodic electronic newsletter containing study and educational information <sup>7</sup>	\$25 (check with the welcome letter)  Certificate of Contribution signed by the NCES Commissioner (at the conclusion of the field test)	\$25 (when data were collected in spring kindergarten and spring first-grade rounds)

Table A-5. ECLS-K:2024 and ECLS-K:2011 national kindergarten and first-grade respondent incentives, by round—Continued

Respondent Type	ECLS-K:2024 Monetary Incentive	ECLS-K:2024 Non-Monetary Incentive	ECLS-K:2024 K-1 Field Test Monetary and Non-Monetary Incentives	ECLS-K:2011 Monetary and Non-Monetary Incentives
Teachers	\$20 + \$7 per child-level survey <sup>8</sup> (check with the welcome letter in the fall kindergarten round and spring kindergarten and first-grade rounds)	Certificate of Contribution signed by the NCES Commissioner (at the conclusion of the spring kindergarten and first-grade rounds) <sup>5</sup>  Periodic electronic newsletter containing study and educational information <sup>7</sup>	\$20 + \$7 per child-level survey (if allowed by district policy; check with the welcome letter)  Certificate of Contribution signed by the NCES Commissioner (at the conclusion of the field test)	\$20 + \$7 per child-level survey (each round)
Parents	\$15 (prepaid Mastercard® with the welcome letter in the fall kindergarten round)  \$15 (prepaid Mastercard® with the welcome letter in the spring kindergarten round)  \$15 (prepaid Mastercard® with the welcome letter in the spring first-grade round)	A children’s book <sup>9</sup> (with the welcome letter in the fall kindergarten round and spring kindergarten and first-grade rounds)  Printed newsletters containing study and educational information (initial newsletter in October 2023; all other annual newsletters in early winter in 2025, 2026, and 2027)	\$15 (prepaid Mastercard® with the welcome letter)  Pad of sticky notes with the U.S. Department of Education logo (with the welcome letter)	\$0; paper bookmark with crayon icons (kindergarten and first-grade rounds); pad of sticky notes with sun logo (second-, third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade rounds)

<sup>1</sup> NCES is investigating the possibility of providing a thank you note from the U.S. Secretary of Education at the end of each study round in recognition of the participant’s contributions to a national education study. If this letter is determined to be feasible, it will be included in a future OMB revision request.

<sup>2</sup> In fall 2011, data from a subsample of children and teachers were collected, when most of the sample children were in the start of their first-grade year. Child assessments and parent interviewers were conducted and paper teacher questionnaires were distributed. Following the same incentive model implemented in the other ECLS-K:2011, teachers were provided \$20 for their background questionnaire, and \$7 for each child-level survey they were asked to complete. School coordinators were given \$25; parents were not provided a monetary incentive.

<sup>3</sup> Initial feedback from national district recruitment indicated that the monetary school incentive may not be adequate to encourage districts to provide permission for their schools to participate in the study. Thus, non-monetary incentives to supplement the monetary school incentive were

considered and the study decided to offer schools a choice of \$300 or \$250 and a year's subscription to a children's magazine. Because district and school recruitment was ongoing, staff that were previously contacted were re-contacted and provided with an update to the incentive model. The study provided previously-contacted schools an option for the previously-discussed incentive (\$300) or the new incentive (e.g., \$250 plus either children's magazines).

<sup>4</sup> As in the ECLS-K:2011, the school incentive will be distributed only to participating original base-year schools and destination schools (which are transfer schools into which four or more sampled children from the same original school have moved). In the spring 2024 kindergarten round, the school coordinator incentive of \$35 was pre-paid to coordinators. (The exception was for school coordinators in schools that agreed to participate too late in the fall 2023 round; those school coordinators received \$65.) However, in the spring 2025 first-grade round, school coordinators in originally-participating schools and transfer schools with four or more sampled students will receive the \$35 incentive. School coordinators in transfer schools with less than four sampled students will not receive an incentive in the spring 2025 round, as their burden is relatively low.

<sup>5</sup> Certificates will be provided in subsequent rounds to transfer and destination schools, and to new staff not included in the base year data collection (e.g., new school coordinators or school administrators).

<sup>6</sup> School coordinators in schools that were recruited too late to participate in the fall kindergarten round received a \$65 incentive check in their spring 2024 welcome package. 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.

<sup>7</sup> Due to the electronic distribution mode, the school staff newsletters will not be distributed until after teacher email addresses have been collected by the project staff. Only those teachers invited to participate in the current round will receive the electronic newsletter directly from ECLS study staff. However, school administrators will be encouraged to share their copy of the newsletter with all of their school staff, as the newsletters will include educational information of widespread interest.

<sup>8</sup> This incentive will only be distributed if the district or school agrees that school staff can be paid. Some districts will prohibit the use of teacher incentives and all district guidelines will be followed.

<sup>9</sup> Parents will be notified that the book was chosen by the school and if they do not wish to keep it, they can donate it to the school library.

As was done in the ECLS-K:2011, children will not receive any significant incentive, monetary or otherwise. As in the past, children will be given the child-friendly pencils (e.g., pencils with a picture or a design on them, not specific to the study) that they use for the math portion of the assessment. This token of appreciation will be provided as a small gesture in an effort to maintain enthusiasm for and a positive attitude about the study. Although the children's books will be distributed to parents in their welcome packages in the beginning of each data collection round, children will also benefit from this incentive.

### **A.9.1 School Incentives**

High levels of school participation are integral to the success of the study. Without a school's cooperation, there can be no school, teacher, or child data collection activity at that facility. It is important to provide schools with an incentive because the study asks a lot of them, including allowing field staff to be in their schools for several days; providing a contact person and space for the children to be assessed; removing children from their normal classes while they are assessed; and obtaining information about the school, the teachers, the children, and the parents. Given the many demands and outside pressures that schools face, it is essential that they see that the burden being placed on them is recognized and that their participation is valued.

For the ECLS-K:2024, NCES proposes to recognize the schools' effort associated with participation for schools with a choice of \$300, or \$250 plus subscriptions to a children's magazine. The incentives will be distributed at the end of each spring round and will be provided to participating schools containing originally-sampled children and participating destination schools, that is, schools where four or more sampled children have moved. Schools to which individual children (or fewer than four study children) have transferred will not be provided a monetary incentive, as their burden is much less than the schools containing originally-sampled students or destination schools. For example, study staff will likely visit transfer schools for a half-day, rather than several days. As well, the logistical arrangements for these visits will be much simpler than for schools containing a large number of students.

In both the base years of the ECLS-K, conducted during the 1998-99 school year, and the ECLS-K:2011, conducted during the 2010-11 school year, schools were offered a \$200 honorarium. A higher incentive is proposed for the ECLS-K:2024 for several reasons. First, the recruitment experience on the ECLS-K:2011 demonstrates that the \$200 incentive was not entirely persuasive in convincing schools to commit to the study. The ECLS-K:2011 school recruitment phase had to be extended by several months in order to build adequate response rates and to recruit a sufficient number of schools from which to sample

children. The study recruited schools throughout the base-year fall round and into the base-year spring round. As a result, child sampling for roughly 60 of the 951 schools was not conducted until the spring kindergarten round, meaning that no fall kindergarten data were collected from children in these schools, their teachers, and their parents.

Secondly, the more recent experience of other longitudinal education studies, such as the MGLS:2017, suggests that the challenges to obtaining district and school participation are increasing. The MGLS:2017 offered schools an incentive of \$400 or \$600 (depending on the school type) in a check or in comparable goods and services and still it proved challenging to reach an acceptable school response rate. The IELS study recruited schools using a \$200 incentive in 2018. However, a higher incentive of \$800 was also approved and offered to schools that had initially refused. While this second tier incentive approach is not proposed for the ECLS-K:2024, the high dollar value of the IELS incentive helps justify an increase in the ECLS:2024 school incentive.

The addition of an option to choose between a \$300 monetary incentive, or a non-monetary incentive worth approximately \$50 in combination with a smaller \$250 monetary incentive, is based on feedback received during the fall 2022 field test, ongoing national district and school recruitment efforts, and conversations amongst ECLS study staff and NCES experts.

A higher school incentive amount for the ECLS-K:2024 (compared with the prior ECLS-K:2011), combined with a longer planned school recruitment phase, will hopefully convince the schools of the value of their participation and lead to higher response rates during the scheduled school recruitment phase. A check in the amount of \$300 or \$250 (depending on whether the school selected the full monetary incentive or the incentive plus the magazine subscription) will be mailed to each school at the end of each spring data collection along with a thank-you letter thanking the school for its participation. If the school chose the \$250 option, the additional non-monetary incentive will also be provided at that time.

Additionally, NCES offered schools in the fall 2023 kindergarten round requiring explicit consent a food-related event, such as a pizza party or movie night, if 100 percent of consent forms were returned (electronically or on paper forms). If the school requiring explicit consent returned 100 percent of their consent forms, the food event was offered to all children in kindergarten, both participants and non-participants, and was offered regardless of whether consent was obtained or refused on the forms. Food events were also used in the MGLS:2017 to acknowledge schools' efforts to support participation. The hope is that the opportunity for a food event for their students encouraged school coordinators to follow up with parents to return consent forms. The ECLS-K:2024 project staff worked with the school to arrange the food for the event.

As an added incentive, schools will periodically receive an electronic newsletter containing study and educational information. School newsletters were distributed four times throughout the kindergarten rounds: October 2023, January 2024, April 2024, and July 2024. Future school newsletters are currently planned for distribution in winter and fall 2025, winter and fall 2026, and winter and spring 2027. The newsletters will serve to provide study updates in a timely manner, as well as relatable findings from other NCES studies. As heard during the recruitment phase of the ECLS-K:2024 and other IES/NCES studies, district and school staff often ask how participation in NCES studies will benefit school staff directly. The additional of a newsletter with actionable findings will not only help raise the profile of IES/NCES among educators, but it will also provide value to school staff who may use the findings to inform their teaching.

Finally, at the conclusion of each spring round, participating schools will receive a certificate of contribution, signed by the NCES Commissioner. Although the study name cannot be referenced, the certificate will recognize the school's contribution to the U.S. Department of Education's research efforts.

The certificate will include the U.S. Department of Education, IES, and/or NCES logos and will be suitable for display in the school if so desired.

### **A.9.2 School Coordinator Incentives**

School coordinators act as the study liaison between study staff and their school and, as such, they play a very important role in the ECLS-K:2024. They help to provide lists of kindergartners for sampling, communicate necessary information to parents, notify teachers and school staff of their role in the study, and arrange the assessment logistics (e.g., space to conduct the assessments). During the field period, they will also be asked to send survey reminders to school administrators, teachers, and parents, as well as distribute the printed parent newsletter. For this reason, school coordinators will be offered a \$65 incentive for the fall 2023 round. The \$65 checks will be attached to the welcome letters mailed to the coordinators at the start of fall 2023 data collection. In subsequent rounds, beginning with spring kindergarten, school coordinators will receive \$35.<sup>38</sup> School coordinators were offered a \$25 incentive during each round of the ECLS-K:2011. NCES proposes increasing this amount to \$65 for the fall kindergarten round of the ECLS-K:2024 because the school coordinator is being asked to play a more significant role in the ECLS-K:2024 data collection activities, specifically using the study's MyECLS website to upload the list of children for sampling and to record school, child, parent, and teacher information directly in the website. Additionally, the school coordinator is being asked to actively encourage the participation of school staff and to follow up with parents on providing consent for their children's participation and with teachers and parents to complete their surveys. In the IELS study, the school coordinator, who had similar responsibilities to the ECLS-K:2024, was offered \$200: \$100 after he or she submitted the list of children and \$100 mailed with a thank-you letter at the end of data collection. Similarly, the MGLS:2017 offered the school coordinator \$150: \$50 after the child roster was uploaded and \$100 at the conclusion of data collection activities. These incentive amounts are in line with what is proposed for the ECLS-K:2024; most school coordinators will receive a total of \$100 after the fall and spring kindergarten rounds, with an additional \$35 after the spring first-grade round.

### **A.9.3 School Administrator Incentives**

To build school administrator survey response rates, NCES proposes to provide school administrators with a prepaid monetary incentive. School administrators will be offered a \$25 incentive check along with the letter introducing the school administrator survey in spring 2024. The same incentive is proposed for the school administrator survey in spring 2025. Because the ECLS-K:2011 was able to achieve high response rates for the school administrator questionnaire (88.2% in spring fifth grade), the same incentive amount is again proposed for the ECLS-K:2024. Also, as mentioned above, as an added incentive, an electronic periodic newsletter containing study and educational information will be e-mailed to school administrators, beginning in the fall of 2023. Additional editions of the newsletter are planned for distribution to school staff in winter, spring, summer, and fall 2024, and then again in winter and fall 2025, winter and fall 2026, and winter and spring 2027.

In addition, NCES is investigating the possibility of providing a thank you note from the U.S. Secretary of Education at the end of each study round in recognition of the school staff member's contributions to a national education study. If this letter is determined to be feasible, it will be included in a future OMB revision request.

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<sup>38</sup> School coordinators in schools that were recruited too late to participate in the fall kindergarten round will receive a \$65 incentive check in their spring 2024 welcome package. 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. School coordinators in schools that participated in the fall 2023 round or in transfer schools, will receive \$35 in the spring 2024 round. In the spring 2025 round, school coordinators in originally-participating schools and transfer schools with four or more sampled students will receive the \$35 incentive. School coordinators in transfer schools with less than four sampled students will not receive an incentive in the spring 2025 round, as their burden is relatively low.

#### **A.9.4 Teacher Incentives**

In the kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade rounds of the ECLS-K:2011, primary and special education teachers received \$7 per child-level questionnaire because they were asked to provide a significant amount of information about each study child based on their observations of these students. Teachers received no remuneration for the teacher-level questionnaires. For the spring third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade rounds of the ECLS-K:2011, OMB approved a change in the incentive structure. Primary classroom teachers were given \$7 per subject-specific child-level questionnaire, along with an additional \$20 associated with the teacher-level questionnaire. Special education teachers received \$7 for each child-level questionnaire and \$20 for the teacher-level questionnaire. A check for the incentive was attached to the package of instruments the teacher received each round. The high questionnaire response rates achieved in the fifth-grade ECLS-K:2011 collection (teacher-level questionnaire at 93.8%, child-level reading questionnaire at 90%, special education teacher questionnaire at 93.1%, child-level special education questionnaire at 89.2%) are attributed in part to the provided incentives. This incentive structure, with the same amounts, was also used successfully on IELS and the MGLS:2017.

NCES proposes to continue this incentive structure for the ECLS-K:2024 because teachers are again being asked to provide a significant amount of key information about the study children's school experiences and outcomes, as well as themselves and their classrooms. NCES proposes that teachers receive \$20 per teacher-level survey plus \$7 for each child-level survey. Initial results from the K-1 field test were evaluated and these levels, rather than an alternative mode of \$15 per teacher-level survey plus \$10 per child level survey, were supported. The same incentive structure for all teachers, regardless of the specific surveys (e.g., general education versus special education) they are being asked to complete, will be used to protect against any perception of unfairness that might result if teachers within a school talk to one another about the amount they have received for a specific survey. Additionally, kindergarten teachers who do not teach sampled children but are asked to complete the teacher-level survey for the census of teachers will also receive the \$20 incentive for completing this survey. Checks for the incentive amounts will be included in the welcome packages to teachers in the fall 2023 and spring 2024 and 2025 rounds.

Based on what occurred in the ECLS-K:2011, it is expected that kindergarten teachers will have on average seven sampled children linked to them, resulting in a total remuneration of \$69 (\$7 for each child-level survey and \$20 for the teacher-level survey). For first-grade teachers, it is expected that they will have an average of four children linked to them, resulting in a total remuneration of \$48.

Teachers will also be emailed the periodic electronic study newsletter, on the same schedule as the school administrators. The newsletters will be emailed once the teacher email address have been confirmed by project staff. While only teachers in the particular round of data collection will receive the newsletter, the school administrator will be encouraged to share the newsletter with other school staff.

In addition, NCES is investigating the possibility of providing a thank you note from the U.S. Secretary of Education at the end of each study round in recognition of the school staff member's contributions to a national education study. If this letter is determined to be feasible, it will be included in a future OMB revision request.

#### **A.9.5 Parent Incentives**

Similar to the MGLS:2017, the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HLS:09), and High School and Beyond Longitudinal Study of 2022 (HS&B:22), the ECLS-K:2024 proposes introducing a parent incentive. Over the course of the ECLS-K:2011, the parent response rates were consistently lower than desired (between 68 percent and 78 percent). No monetary parent incentive was used in the ECLS-K:2011, although parents were provided with a paper bookmark with crayon icons in early rounds, and a

pad of sticky notes with the ECLS-K:2011 sun logo in later rounds. Given the acknowledged difficulty in recruiting respondents and the precedent set by other recent studies, NCES would like to provide a monetary incentive to parents in the national rounds of the ECLS-K:2024.

An incentive experiment, described in detail in Section A.9.5.1, was conducted as part of the K-1 field test to evaluate the effect of an incentive on response rates. For the field test, half of the parents received a prepaid Mastercard® loaded with \$15 along with their invitation to complete the parent survey, while half of the parents received no incentive. Assignment into the two experimental groups was at the school level, so all parents at a school either received the \$15 Mastercard®, or none of them did. NCES proposes to use the same \$15 Mastercard® parent incentive for the national study, as initial results of the fall 2022 field test support that its inclusion increased parent response rates.

In addition to this monetary incentive, NCES proposes providing all parents with an age-appropriate children's book. The book will be delivered in the parent packets with the parent welcome letter each study round. While only a small non-monetary incentive, the book will hopefully remind the parents of the study throughout the course of the study. Parents will be informed that the school chose the book title and that if they do not wish to keep the book, they can donate it to the school's library.

Parents will also receive an annual newsletter (with the first newsletter in October 2023, the second in winter 2025, and then every early winter through the life of the study), focused on study news and information that is pertinent to parents of early elementary-aged children. The newsletter will be printed and school coordinators will be asked to place it in sampled children's backpacks to take home to their parents.

In addition, NCES is investigating the possibility of providing a thank you note from the U.S. Secretary of Education at the end of each study round in recognition of parents' contributions to a national education study. If this letter is determined to be feasible, it will be included in a future OMB revision request.

### **A.9.5.1 Parent Incentive Experiment**

Research has shown that incentives, especially prepaid cash incentives, can improve response rates (e.g., Mercer 2015). The literature on this topic largely suggests that prepaid incentives and monetary incentives are more effective than promised incentives or gifts (e.g., Singer et al. (2000), Mercer (2015)). While a majority of this literature is based on household studies, some of these findings may be extrapolated to school-based studies such as the ECLS-K:2024, for instance because in both household studies and school-based studies, parents are being contacted to provide information on their backgrounds and family context. For example, the National Household Education Surveys (NHES) program has done several incentive experiments in household education surveys (e.g., Williams et al. (2016); Jackson, McPhee, and Lavrakas (2020)).

While these household incentive test experiments may provide some insight on what to expect in the ECLS-K:2024, findings on the efficacy of incentives in a household survey model may not be directly applicable to use of incentives with parents identified in a school-based survey of elementary-aged children such as the ECLS-K:2024. Also, a new data collection approach for the ECLS program studies first being taken in the ECLS-K:2024 may make these household incentive findings less relevant to the current study. This approach, tested in the K-1 field test, involved asking school coordinators to initiate contact with parents of sampled students rather than having the first contact come from the study's staff. The goal of this approach was to improve parent survey response rate by enhancing the legitimacy of the survey by using a member of the participating school's own staff, that is, the school coordinator, make initial contacts to prospective respondents. Additionally, due to increased school concerns with privacy, it was anticipated that schools would be unlikely to share parent names or contact information directly with

study staff. The model of asking school coordinators to distribute the initial survey invitation along with introductory study materials, as well as to conduct follow-up outreach with non-responders as needed, was used successfully on IELS. If this model also works well for the national rounds of the ECLS-K:2024, then the applicability of the household incentive test results may be further decreased, as initial contact of study participants no longer closely mirrors what is done in household studies.

Existing literature on the use of incentives in school-based studies may be more relevant to the ECLS-K:2024; however, school-based incentive studies are not as prevalent in the research literature. While some school-based studies have experimented with incentives, such work has not been conducted in the base-year of the study when the sampled parents are first introduced to the study, which is the goal of the current ECLS K-1 field test experiment. For example, the High School Longitudinal Survey of 2009 (HSL:09) experimented with incentives in the field test of its second follow-up round. Also of note is that this incentive test was a test of student, not parent, incentives.

In addition to studies on the effect of incentives on increasing response rates, a set of experiments have been conducted on the effect of incentives on measurement properties, especially in terms of item nonresponse and satisficing effects.<sup>39</sup> The literature in this area is still emerging, but so far indicates that there is no consistent relationship between providing an incentive and data quality. Medway and Tourangeau (2015) conducted three experiments on the effect of a \$5 prepaid incentive on measurement quality. They concluded, “Overall, our results should be reassuring for survey practitioners considering the use of prepaid cash incentives—there is little reason to believe that response quality will be negatively affected as a result of this decision.” Some other studies have recently looked at data quality when varying incentive amounts in web panel studies and non-probability samples. This literature is less pertinent, but also points to a lack of evidence of incentives affecting response behavior. Stanley et al. (2020) examined incentives’ effects on quality in a web panel survey and, “found that larger incentives were associated with increased interview completion rates with minimal impact on data quality or bias.” Spreen, House, and Gao (2019) examined varied incentive amounts in a web panel study (with incentive values of \$0.50 to \$3) and did not find evidence of improved or varied data quality with the higher incentive levels.

The parent survey is a critical component of ECLS program studies, and it has traditionally produced response rates below NCES standards (e.g., the ECLS-K:2011 fall kindergarten parent interview response rate was 74 percent). As noted in the literature cited above, incentives are an effective method of increasing response rates in various types of studies and evidence suggests they may be offered without a negative effect on resulting data quality. Given the lack of a strong research base exploring the use of parent incentives in the base year of a school-based study, it was important for the ECLS-K:2024 to include an incentive experiment in the K-1 field test.

Two levels of parent incentives were tested for all children sampled in the K-1 field test, with 25 schools assigned to the incentive group and 25 schools assigned to the non-incentive groups. The two levels of incentive were (1) \$0 (no incentive) and (2) a \$15 prepaid Mastercard®. Given the sample size available, a simple test of two conditions for the incentive amount was most appropriate for the field test. Introducing more than two conditions would compromise the power to detect effects of the different experimental conditions. The two levels of the parent incentive (\$0 and \$15) were chosen to be as different as possible within reason and budget constraints to assess the potential for improving the response rate.

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<sup>39</sup> Respondent satisficing behavior involves actions taken to move quickly through a survey, with a minimum of effort. Examples of respondent satisficing behavior include skipping items, randomly selecting responses without thought, or selecting the same response option (e.g., the first option) for each item. Satisficing behavior typically negatively affects data quality.



The incentive was prepaid in the sense that the initial invitation to complete the parent survey contained the incentive if the parent is assigned to the \$15 level. Parents were asked to log on to the MyECLS website with a unique PIN in order to activate their Mastercard®. The parent did not have to create an account on the website, provide parental consent, or complete their web survey in order to activate their card.

For the field test, schools were assigned randomly to one of the two experiment groups. All parents of sampled children within a particular schools received the same amount, either \$0 or \$15. The benefit of this approach was that all of the parents in the same school received the same incentive (or none at all); there was no potential for within-school contamination of the test conditions. Additionally, this model removed the possibility of backlash or negative reaction to the study that could result from parents in the \$0 incentive group discovering that other participating parents in their school received a \$15 incentive.

Parents that were in the \$15 group received the incentive in their welcome packet. The packet contained:

- a welcome letter with the MyECLS website address and instructions for accessing the site to provide consent and complete the survey,
- the parent fact sheet,
- a pad of sticky notes printed with the U.S. Department of Education logo,
- the \$15 prepaid Mastercard® in a separate sealed envelope, and
- their unique MyECLS PIN needed to securely logon to MyECLS in a separate sealed envelope.

The envelope with the prepaid card contained information about the use of the card (that it is valid only in the U.S. and the expiration date), the ECLS help desk phone number, and text thanking the respondent. The envelope also included text explaining how the respondent may activate the card.<sup>40</sup> The study name was not included on the envelope or the card. Parents in the \$0 group also received the parent welcome packet and all of the materials received by the \$15 group with the exception of the \$15 prepaid card, but there was no mention of an incentive in their letter.

The pad of sticky notes printed with the U.S. Department of Education logo was the only non-monetary incentive in the K-1 field test, and it was provided to all parents (regardless of whether they were in the \$0 or \$15 monetary incentive group). Other non-monetary incentives were considered for the field test but were eventually decided against because of evidence of their poorer performance in gaining initial cooperation in surveys. Non-monetary incentives have been used in school settings (pizza parties for teachers, for example), but non-monetary incentives like explanatory brochures and school supplies have not been shown to be effective for parents in the current research literature (see Stähli and Joye 2016).

The parent welcome packets were assembled at Westat and sent via FedEx to the school coordinator, along with distribution instructions. Each packet was labeled “Parent of <child’s name>” to indicate who should receive the packet. The school coordinator placed the appropriate packets in the backpacks of the sampled children. The school coordinator was also asked to email each parent to notify them that the packet was on its way so that parents could be sure to check their child’s backpack for the materials.

Overall, slightly over 3,900 parents were in schools with an incentive (\$15) and almost 3,000 parents were in schools with no incentive. About 20 percent of the parents in the incentive schools completed the parent survey, compared to 9 percent of those in the no incentive schools, a difference of 11 percentage points. The difference in the response rate by incentive is consistent across the grade of the child. The only deviation from the main pattern was found for parents in the other private school, where the \$15

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<sup>40</sup> The instructions on the envelope to activate the prepaid card were: “To activate the enclosed \$15 prepaid Mastercard®, please visit the study website and enter your unique PIN from the sealed postcard that was sent with this informational packet. The prepaid 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.

incentive did not correlate with a higher parental survey response rate. However, the other private school category had a small parent sample size in the field test; sample sizes for parents in Catholic schools were somewhat larger (but still not large enough to support comparisons) and parents in public schools were significantly larger (large enough to support comparisons)). The ECLS program staff has concluded that the K-1 field test school sample size of parents was too small to draw any conclusions on the effectiveness of the incentive by the type of school except for public schools. While parent response rates varied widely by school, the parents in the 17 schools with incentives have considerably higher response rates than those in the schools with no incentive.

Effectiveness of the incentive for the subgroup of parents whose children completed the child assessment was also examined. (That is, the field test also contained parents who completed the survey, but their child did not complete an assessment.) This group is more typical of the group of parents in the national data collection rounds, where it is more likely that both parents and children will participate. Although there were only approximately 1,920 parent surveys from parents who also had their children assessed, the differences in response rates for those parents who were given the incentive and whose child was assessed were greater than observed for all sampled parents (that is, parents who were either given or not given the incentive, regardless of whether their child was assessed).

The analysis of the fall 2022 field test data suggested the parent monetary incentive was effective at increasing parent response rates. These large differences might be attenuated in the main study when higher overall parent response rates are expected than were achieved for the field test, but the K-1 field test results did suggest the incentive is effective at increasing response rates.

## **A.10 Assurance of Confidentiality**

The ECLS-K:2024 national study data will be released in restricted-use and public-use files. No directly identifying personally identifying information (PII), such as teacher, child, or parent names, will be released in either file. An NCES school identifier will be included only in the restricted-use files to allow for linking to NCES administrative data such as the Common Core of Data (CCD). The national sampling plan and recruitment response rates will be published in future study documentation such as methodology reports; however, the list of participating districts and schools will never be released publicly.

Confidentiality and data security protection procedures have been put in place for the ECLS-K:2024 to ensure that the contractor and its subcontractors comply with all privacy requirements, including:

1. The Statement of Work of the ECLS-K:2024 contract;
2. *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974* (20 U.S.C. §1232(g));
3. *Privacy Act of 1974* (5 U.S.C. §552a);
4. *Privacy Act Regulations* (34 CFR Part 5b);
5. *Computer Security Act of 1987*;
6. *U.S.A. Patriot Act of 2001* (P.L. 107-56);
7. *Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002* (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9573);
8. *Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015* (6 U.S.C. §151);
9. *Foundations of Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018*, Title III, Part B, Confidential Information Protection;
10. The U.S. Department of Education General Handbook for Information Technology Security General Support Systems and Major Applications Inventory Procedures (March 2005);
11. The U.S. Department of Education Incident Handling Procedures (February 2009);
12. The U.S. Department of Education, ACS Directive OM: 5-101, Contractor Employee Personnel Security Screenings;

13. NCES Statistical Standards; and

14. All new legislation that impacts the data collected through the contract for this study.

Furthermore, the contractor will comply with the Department of Education’s IT security policy requirements as set forth in the Handbook for Information Assurance Security Policy and related procedures and guidance, as well as IT security requirements in the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA), Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) publications, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) standards and guidance. All data products and publications will also adhere to the NCES Statistical Standards, as described at the website: <https://nces.ed.gov/statprog/2012/>.<sup>41</sup>

By law (20 U.S.C. §9573), a violation of the confidentiality restrictions is a felony, punishable by imprisonment of up to 5 years and/or a fine of up to \$250,000. The ECLS-K:2024 procedures for maintaining confidentiality include notarized nondisclosure affidavits obtained from all personnel who will have access to individual identifiers; personnel training regarding the meaning of confidentiality; controlled and protected access to computer files; built-in safeguards concerning status monitoring and receipt control systems; and a secure, staffed, in-house computing facility that has Authority-to-Operate from the U.S. Department of Education. The ECLS-K:2024 staff follow detailed guidelines for securing sensitive project data, including, but not limited to: physical/environment protections, building access controls, system access controls, system login restrictions, user identification and authorization procedures, encryption, and project file storage/archiving/destruction.

Additionally, the contractor will take security measures to protect the web data collection application from unauthorized access. The web server will include an SSL certificate and will be configured to force encrypted data transmission over the Internet. All files uploaded to the MyECLS website will be stored in a secure project folder that is accessible and visible to authorized study staff only. NCES has a secure data transfer system, which uses SSL technology, allowing the transfer of encrypted data over the Internet. Any exchange of administrative information will be encrypted.

The Department has established a policy regarding the personnel security screening requirements for all contractor employees and their subcontractors. The contractor must comply with these personnel security screening requirements throughout the life of the contract including several requirements that the contractor must meet for each employee working on the contract for 30 days or more. Among these requirements are that each person working on the contract must be assigned a position risk level. The risk levels are high, moderate, and low based upon the level of harm that a person in the position can cause to the Department’s interests. Each person working on the contract must complete the requirements for a “Contractor Security Screening.” Depending on the risk level assigned to each person’s position, a follow-up background investigation by the Department will occur.

NCES will assure schools and individuals participating in ECLS-K:2024 that all of the data provided by schools, staff, parents, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). The laws pertaining to the collection and use of PII will be clearly communicated in correspondence with states, districts, schools, teachers, students, and parents. Letters and informational materials will be sent to parents and school staff describing the study, its voluntary nature, and the extent to which respondents and their responses will be kept confidential. This information will also be included in any research applications required by school districts. A list of students will be requested from school districts and/or schools under the FERPA exception to the general consent requirement that permits disclosures to authorized representatives of the Secretary for the purpose of evaluating Federally

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<sup>41</sup> This website lists the current standards as of the drafting of this document. If new standards are enacted during the course of the study, those will be adhered to in place of the ones currently noted on this website.

supported education programs (34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3)(iii) and 99.35). This information will be securely destroyed when no longer needed for the purposes specified in 34 CFR §99.35.

The following language will be included, as appropriate, in respondent contact materials and on cover pages and login webpages of the data collection instruments:

- NCES is authorized to conduct the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2023-24 (ECLS-K:2024) by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543). The data are being collected for NCES by Westat, a U.S.-based research organization. All of the information [*respondent type*] provide may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). By law, every NCES employee as well as every NCES agent, such as contractors, has taken an oath and is subject to a jail term of up to 5 years, a fine of \$250,000, or both if he or she willfully discloses ANY identifiable information about students. Electronic submission of each student’s information will be monitored for viruses, malware, and other threats by Federal employees and contractors in accordance with the Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015. [The collected information will be combined across respondents to produce statistical reports.]
- According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this voluntary information collection is 1850-0750. Approval expires MM/DD/202Y. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average approximately [x] minutes per response, including the time to review instructions[, gather the data needed,] and complete and review the information collection. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate, suggestions for improving this information collection, or any comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual submission, please write directly to: The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2023-24 (ECLS-K:2024), National Center for Education Statistics, PCP, 550 12th St., SW, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Washington, DC 20202.

NCES understands the legal and ethical need to protect the privacy of the ECLS-K:2024 survey respondents and, with the contractor, has extensive experience in developing data files for release that meet the Government’s requirements to protect individually identifiable data from disclosure.

## A.11 Sensitive Questions

The ECLS-K:2024 is a voluntary study, and no persons are required to respond to the surveys or to participate in the assessments. In addition, respondents may skip or decline to answer any question they are asked. This voluntary aspect of the survey is clearly stated in the respondent letters, study fact sheets, and MyECLS website.

The following describes the general nature of the kindergarten and first-grade data collection instruments.

**School administrator surveys.** These items are not of a sensitive nature and should not pose a problem to respondents.

**Primary teacher surveys.** In general, the items in the teacher- and child-level teacher surveys are not of a sensitive nature. However, there are some exceptions.

The information collected in the primary teacher child-level survey’s rating scales could be regarded as sensitive, because the teacher is asked to rate each sampled child’s social skills and classroom behaviors, including the ability to control or regulate his/her behavior in the classroom, problem behaviors (e.g., anger, impulsivity, anxiety), and learning disposition (e.g., curiosity, self-direction, and organization). Because schools often emphasize different skills and concepts, teachers will also be asked to rate the

child's performance in the curricular areas and domains that are included in the cognitive assessments (e.g., language and literacy skills and mathematical thinking). Teachers will also be asked to rate children's understanding of science.

The purpose of the teacher ratings of children is both to extend the range of domains assessed in the direct child assessments (e.g., by gathering information about socioemotional development and adaptation to school) and to deepen understanding of children's performance in various domains by tapping them in multiple ways (e.g., by gathering information on cognitive development that will complement results of the direct assessments).

Teacher assessments of children's socioemotional skills will provide several kinds of information. First, teachers will supply information about children's social skills and classroom behaviors, including the ability to regulate their behavior in classroom contexts, problem behaviors (e.g., fighting, arguing, anger, depression, low self-esteem, impulsiveness, anxiety), learning dispositions or "approaches to learning" (e.g., curiosity, self-direction, organization), and experiences with peer victimization, both as a victim and as the aggressor.<sup>42</sup> A study of bullying by the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) found that 16 percent of middle school students reported being bullied (Nansel et al., 2001). Fewer studies have been done with younger children, but those that have been published suggest that bullying is experienced by many children and is related to negative outcomes. Glew et al.'s (2005) study of third- through fifth-graders found that 22 percent of children were classified as victims, bullies, or both. Victims, and children who were both bullies and victims, had lower achievement scores and were more likely to feel like they did not belong at school compared to bystanders (Glew et al. 2005). Kochenderfer and Ladd (1996) found a relation between victimization and school adjustment outcomes, with victimization related to children's loneliness and desire to avoid school. The ECLS-K:2011 included questions about peer victimization starting in second grade. Having the ECLS-K:2024 collect information about peer victimization about children in earlier grades in this national sample of elementary school children would be useful.

Teachers will also be asked about the sampled children's relationships, including relationships with peers as well as the relationship with the teacher. These data will provide information about relationships with adults and peers that may act as protective factors to support child development. In addition, teachers will be asked to provide information about cognitive skills and development of children related to academic skills, including expressive aspects of language, quantitative skills, planning/problem-solving skills, and knowledge of the physical, social, and biological worlds. These data will provide additional information about children's academic development and supplement findings from the direct child assessments.

**Special education teacher surveys.** In the special education teachers' child-level surveys, special education teachers are asked about children's special education services and disabilities. In addition, they will be asked about their relationship with the sampled child. These data are necessary to provide information about the support and services provided to children in special education classes, the history of children's experiences with special education or related services, children's disabilities, and education goals for the future. These data will also provide information on teachers' relationships with children that may act as protective factors for children's development.

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<sup>42</sup> The ECLS-K:2011 used the term "peer victimization" instead of "bullying" to describe the behaviors that were asked about because the behaviors did not meet the requirements that are used in the federal definition of "bullying" (see What Is Bullying | StopBullying.gov). The federal definition states that to be considered "bullying," the behavior must be aggressive and include an imbalance of power, and there must be repetition, meaning that bullying behaviors must happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once. The questions that were asked in the ECLS-K:2011 and that are also planned for the ECLS-K:2024 do not ask sufficient detail about the behaviors to meet this federal definition of bullying. The behaviors, therefore, are referred to as "peer victimization" instead of "bullying." There is no requirement in the child development research literature on bullying and peer victimization to use the federal definition of bullying to distinguish these terms.

**Direct cognitive assessments.** The direct cognitive assessments are essential in determining children’s performance levels at the time they enter school and changes in their performance as they progress through school. These questions are voluntary and children will be told that they do not have to answer them.

Because schools often use different standards in their own assessments of children, a uniform set of assessment instruments and procedures is needed for the ECLS-K:2024. The items to be included in the direct cognitive assessments are not themselves sensitive in nature. However, direct assessments of children do raise certain concerns about the assessment procedures to be used. Of primary concern is the length of the assessments.

The cognitive assessments are designed to be administered within an hour time period, on average. NCES has developed instruments appropriate to the ages of the participating children, and every effort will be made to staff the study with field assessors who have prior experience in working with children to conduct the direct assessments. Issues specific to working with children will also figure prominently in assessor training.

**Parent surveys.** Several topics that will be addressed in the parent survey are sensitive in nature. Questions about family income, household food sufficiency, child-rearing and disciplinary practices, parental depression, life stress, discrimination, peer victimization, and adverse child experiences will be included in the parent survey.

Prior research indicates that each of these topics is correlated with children’s achievement and helps to predict children’s preparedness for and success in school. Collecting data on these topics will allow researchers to go beyond descriptive analyses of variation in children’s performance by basic background characteristics such as race/ethnicity and gender. Researchers will be able to test hypotheses about how a wide range of family characteristics relate to early success in school. Therefore, it is important to include questions on the sensitive topics listed above in the parent surveys. All questions can be skipped, or answered as refused or don’t know, if the respondent chooses not to answer them.

Results from previous ECLS program studies showed that there were very low levels of missing data in the parent instruments. For example, item-level response rates for sensitive items such as parent income in the ECLS-K:2011 spring kindergarten round and life stress in the ECLS-K:2011 spring fifth-grade round were both above 90 percent (90.5 percent and 90.9 percent, respectively).

Additionally, because it is imperative that respondents can be found at a later date for follow-up collections in a longitudinal study, the ECLS-K:2024 includes a section on the MyECLS website asking for locating information from parents to be used to contact them for later rounds of the study. The locating information includes telephone numbers, addresses, email addresses. The parent survey includes items asking for the names and contact information of individuals who would always know the whereabouts of the respondents.

## **A.12 Estimated Response Burden**

Burden estimates for all activities associated with the first three rounds of national data collection, including the advance school contact prior to the fall and spring kindergarten rounds and the spring first-grade round, are shown in this section. This section also includes the burden estimate for the recruitment of transfer schools in the spring kindergarten and first-grade rounds.

**Kindergarten and first-grade data collection.** The kindergarten and first-grade data collections portions of table A-6 show the expected burden for the two kindergarten rounds and one first-grade round of data collection. The estimated time to complete each kindergarten survey is based on the length of the surveys

used in the K-1 field test. The updated timing for the spring first-grade teacher child-level survey is included in this revision request.

The burden time estimates are based on the maximum reasonable expected burden per respondent:

- In the fall of 2023 and spring of 2024, primary teachers of each sampled child will be asked to complete a teacher-level survey containing questions on his/her background and teaching experience. Kindergarten teachers in the participating schools who do not teach sampled children will also be asked to complete the teacher-level survey. In the fall of 2023 and spring of 2024, primary teachers will also be asked to complete a child-level survey for each of the sampled children they teach. It is expected that data will be collected from 2,465 primary kindergarten teachers in the two kindergarten rounds. An additional 1,060 kindergarten teachers who do not teach sampled children are also expected to participate in the two kindergarten rounds. Across the approximately 850 participating schools, this will result in 3,525 kindergarten teachers participating in each of the two kindergarten rounds. It is estimated that approximately 7 sampled children will be taught by each kindergarten teacher who has sampled students in the classroom. Primary teachers of each sampled child will again be asked to complete a teacher-level survey on his/her background and teacher experience in the spring of 2025, as well as child-level surveys for each of the sampled children they teach. It is expected that data will be collected from 4,467 teachers in the spring of 2025<sup>43</sup>. It is estimated that approximately 3 sampled children will be taught by each first-grade teacher.

It is estimated that the fall kindergarten teacher-level survey will take approximately 23 minutes to complete. It is estimated that the spring kindergarten and spring first-grade teacher-level surveys will each take approximately 23 minutes to complete. Each of the fall and spring kindergarten child-level surveys are estimated to take 12 minutes for completion; the spring first-grade child-level survey is estimated to take 14 minutes for completion.

- In the spring of 2024 and 2025, special education teachers will be asked to complete a teacher-level survey and child-level surveys for the children that they teach. It is expected that 425 special education teachers will participate in the 2024 spring round and 620 will participate in the spring 2025 round. It is estimated that in the spring of 2024, approximately 2 sampled children will be taught by each special education teacher, although this number may decline in later rounds.

The special education teacher-level surveys, both the spring the spring kindergarten and spring first-grade versions, are expected to each take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The special education child-level surveys, both the spring kindergarten and spring first-grade versions, are expected to each take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

- It is expected that 680 school administrators will complete surveys in the spring kindergarten round and 1,640 school administrators will complete surveys in the spring-first grade rounds. The school administrator survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete, in each round.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> This count of teachers also includes a small number of off-grade students, that is sampled students who either remained in kindergarten in the spring of 2025, or skipped first grade to advance to second grade in the spring of 2025. Regardless of grade level, these students remain in the sample, and their teachers are asked to complete the teacher- and child-level surveys.

<sup>44</sup> The estimate for completion of the school administrator survey includes both time spent by the school administrator and a designee, if one is chosen.

- As described in Part B, at least 18,400 children will be sampled across at least 790 schools. All of their parents/guardians will be asked to complete an online survey during the kindergarten rounds. The fall kindergarten parent survey was expected to take approximately 30 minutes to complete, while the spring kindergarten survey is expected to take approximately 45 minutes to complete. In spring 2025, it is expected that approximately 18,060 parents will have their children remaining as participants in the study and therefore will be asked to complete the web survey. The spring first-grade parent survey is expected to take 45 minutes to complete. In addition to their survey burden, it is estimated that parents spent approximately 10 minutes reviewing study materials and providing consent for their child’s participation prior to the fall kindergarten round and will spend 15 minutes to provide contact information prior to the spring kindergarten round and spring first-grade rounds.
- The school coordinators will spend on average up to 2 hours throughout the assessment period supporting study activities. Approximately 8 hours was also estimated to be spent by school coordinators to compile information needed by the study for student sampling and to provide school, child, and teacher information prior to the fall kindergarten round. Approximately 3 hours will be spent by school coordinators reviewing and updating school, child, and teacher information prior to each spring round of data collection.

**Transfer district and school recruitment.** The transfer school recruitment portion of table A-6 shows the expected burden for the recruitment activities for the spring first-grade transfer schools, including time needed to review study materials and provide school information and child-level data such as accommodations and teacher names. It is expected that 1,973 transfer schools will be identified from spring 2024 to spring 2025. Of these, about half are predicted to be in new districts while the other half are predicted to be in already-cooperating districts. Of the newly-identified transfer schools, it is estimated that 1,184 will be in-scope and willing to participate.

The total response burden for recruiting transfer schools is based on the following:

- At the district level, it is estimated that it will take 20 minutes on average for district personnel to review the materials and either agree or decline to participate. The total response burden estimate for district institutional review board (IRB) approvals (in the special handling districts that require completion of a research application before they will allow schools under their jurisdiction to participate in a study) is based on an estimated 120 minutes for IRB staff approval and 120 minutes per panelist for approval by the district’s IRB panel, which is estimated to average 5 panelists.
- At the school level, it is estimated that it will take 20 minutes on average for school administrators to review the materials and either agree or decline to participate. It is estimated that an hour will be needed for school coordinators to provide school, child, and teacher information and to schedule the school visit.

The estimated respondent time burden cost across the fall kindergarten data collection activities was \$729,341 for 24,621 burden hours. For the spring kindergarten data collection activities, the total estimated burden is \$708,480 for 23,925 burden hours. For the spring first-grade data collection activities, the total estimated respondent time burden cost is \$869,610 for 28,756 hours. The total estimated respondent time burden cost for transfer school recruitment is \$312,682 for 6,790 hours.



Table A-6. Estimated respondent burden for the ECLS-K:2024 kindergarten and first-grade data collections and transfer school recruitment

ECLS-K:2024 Activity	Sample Size	Expected Response Rate	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses	Average Burden Time per Response (minutes)	Total Burden (hours)	Estimated Respondent Average Hourly Wage <sup>1</sup>	Estimated Respondent Burden Time Cost
<b><i>Fall Kindergarten Advance School Contact (fall 2023)</i></b>								
School coordinators (sampling and study activities call)	850	1.00	850	850	480	6,800	\$30.33	\$206,244.00
Parents (provide consent)	21,000	0.86	18,060	18,060	10	3,010	\$28.01	\$84,310.10
<b><i>Fall Kindergarten Data Collection (fall 2023)</i></b>								
Kindergarten teachers (fall K teacher-level survey)	3,917	0.90	3,525	3,525	23	1,351	\$32.25	\$43,581.52
Kindergarten teachers (fall K child-level survey)	21,000	0.80	16,800	16,800 <sup>4</sup>	12	3,360	\$32.25	\$108,360.00
Parents (fall K survey)	21,000	0.80	16,800	16,800	30	8,400	\$28.01	\$235,284.00
School coordinators (fall K)	850	1.00	850	850	120	1,700	\$30.33	\$51,561.00
Kindergarten direct assessment (fall K) <sup>2</sup>	21,000	0.86	18,060	18,060	60	18,060	—	—
<b>Fall Kindergarten Data Collection Total</b>	—	—	<b>22,435</b>	<b>56,885</b>		<b>24,621</b>	—	<b>\$729,340.62</b>
<b><i>Spring Kindergarten Advance School Contact (spring 2024)</i></b>								
School coordinators (study activities call)	850	1.00	850	850	180	2,550	\$30.33	\$77,341.50
Parents (update contact information)	21,000	0.33	6,930	6,930	15	1,733	\$28.01	\$48,527.33
<b><i>Spring Kindergarten Data Collection (spring 2024)</i></b>								
Kindergarten teachers (spring K teacher-level survey)	3,917	0.90	3,525	3,525	23	1,351	\$32.25	\$43,581.52
Kindergarten teachers (spring K child-level survey)	21,000	0.80	16,800	16,800 <sup>4</sup>	12	3,360	\$32.25	\$108,360.00
Special education teachers (spring K teacher-level survey)	472	0.90	425	425	20	142	\$32.25	\$4,566.60
Special education teachers (spring K child-level survey)	1,125	0.80	900	900 <sup>5</sup>	10	150	\$32.25	\$4,837.50
Parents (spring K survey)	21,000	0.80	16,800	16,800	45	12,600	\$28.01	\$352,926
School administrators (spring K survey) <sup>3</sup>	850	0.80	680	680	30	340	\$49.35	\$16,779.00
School coordinators (spring K)	850	1.00	850	850	120	1,700	\$30.33	\$51,561.00

See notes at end of table.

Table A-6. Estimated respondent burden for the ECLS-K:2024 kindergarten and first-grade data collections and transfer school recruitment—Continued

ECLS-K:2024 Activity	Sample Size	Expected Response Rate	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses	Average Burden Time per Response (minutes)	Total Burden (hours)	Estimated Respondent Average Hourly Wage <sup>1</sup>	Estimated Respondent Burden Time Cost
Kindergarten direct assessment (spring K) <sup>2</sup>	21,000	0.86	18,060	18,060	65	19,565	—	—
<b>Spring Kindergarten Data Collection Total</b>	—	—	<b>1,105<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>7,760</b>		<b>23,925</b>	—	<b>\$708,480.45</b>
<i>First-Grade Advance School Contact (fall 2024)</i>								
School coordinators (study activities call)	2,025	1.00	2,025	2,025	180	6,075	\$30.33	\$184,254.75
Parents (update contact information)	18,060	0.33	5,960	5,960	15	1,490	\$28.01	\$41,734.90
<i>First-Grade Data Collection (spring 2025)</i>								
First-grade teachers (teacher-level survey) <sup>6</sup>	4,963	0.90	4,467	4,467	23	1,712	\$32.25	\$55,219.58
First-grade teachers (child-level survey) <sup>6</sup>	18,060	0.80	14,448	14,448	14	3,371	\$32.25	\$108,721.20
Special education teachers (teacher-level survey)	689	0.90	620	620	20	207	\$32.25	\$6,666.08
Special education teachers (child-level survey)	1,088	0.80	870	870	10	145	\$32.25	\$4,678.40
School administrators <sup>3</sup>	2,055	0.80	1,640	1,640	30	820	\$49.35	\$40,467.00
Parents	18,060	0.80	14,448	14,448	45	10,836	\$28.01	\$303,516.36
School coordinators	2,050	1.00	2,050	2,050	120	4,100	\$30.33	\$124,353.00
First-grade direct assessment <sup>2</sup>	18,060	0.81	14,564	14,564	65	15,777	—	—
<b>First-Grade Data Collection Total</b>	—	—	<b>5,087<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>46,528</b>		<b>28,756</b>	—	<b>\$869,609.86</b>
<i>Transfer School Recruitment (spring 2024 through spring 2025)</i>								
New district administrator recruitment <sup>7</sup>	987	0.70	691	691	20	230	\$49.35	\$11,366.95
New district IRB staff study approval <sup>7</sup>	395	1.00	395	395	120	790	\$49.35	\$38,986.50
New district IRB panel study approval <sup>7</sup>	1,973	1.00	1,973	1,973	120	3,946	\$49.35	\$194,735.10
Cooperating district administrator recruitment <sup>7</sup>	987	1.00	987	987	15	247	\$49.35	\$12,189.45
New school administrator recruitment <sup>7</sup>	1,973	0.60	1,184	1,184	20	395	\$49.35	\$19,473.51

See notes at end of table.

Table A-6. Estimated respondent burden for the ECLS-K:2024 kindergarten and first-grade data collections and transfer school recruitment—Continued

ECLS-K:2024 Activity	Sample Size	Expected Response Rate	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses	Average Burden	Total Burden	Estimated Respondent Average Hourly Wage <sup>1</sup>	Estimated Respondent Burden Time Cost
					Time per Response (minutes)	(hours)		
New school coordinators <sup>7</sup>	1,184	1.00	1,184	1,184	60	1,184	\$30.33	\$35,904.65
<b>Transfer School Recruitment Total</b>	—	—	<b>6,414<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>6,414</b>		<b>6,792</b>	—	<b>\$312,681.97</b>
<b>TOTAL FOR THIS SUBMISSION</b>	—	—	<b>35,039</b>	<b>157,586</b>		<b>84,093</b>	—	<b>\$2,620,021.71</b>

<sup>1</sup> The average hourly earnings of parents derived from May 2021 Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupation Employment Statistics is \$28.01, of elementary school teachers is \$32.25, of elementary school special education teachers is \$32.25, of education administrators is \$49.35, and of educational guidance counselors is \$30.33 (used as an estimate for the school coordinator’s hourly rate). If mean hourly wage was not provided, it was computed assuming 2,080 hours per year. Source: BLS Occupation Employment Statistics, [https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_nat.htm](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm) Occupation codes: All employees (00-0000); elementary school teachers (25-2021); elementary school special education teachers (25-2052); Education Administrators (11-9032); and Educational guidance counselors (21-1012); accessed on August 11, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> The total number of respondents contains no duplication in respondent count, and in this case the total estimate here adds only the teachers to the numbers of unique respondents. That is, parents, school administrators, and school coordinators are only counted once, as all will be asked to review the respondent materials, with a subset also expected to complete the surveys. These respondents are included in the count of respondents participating in the fall kindergarten data collection, but not counted again in the count of respondents participating in spring kindergarten or spring first-grade. Although they will be asked to complete two types of surveys (teacher-level and child-level), teachers are counted only once in the two kindergarten rounds. A new count of teachers is provided for the spring first-grade round as the teachers in that round will likely be new to the study. That is, the participating first-grade teachers are not expected to be the same as the kindergarten teachers who participated in the fall and spring kindergarten rounds. The number of students participating in the direct child assessment are not included in the total number of respondents, nor are the hours they spend doing the assessments included in the total number of burden hours, because assessments are not subject to Paperwork Reduction Act reporting.

<sup>3</sup> These estimates include any designees asked by the School Administrator to complete portions of the School Administrator survey.

<sup>4</sup> The number of primary teacher child-level surveys estimates approximately seven students per primary teacher in each school, in the kindergarten round.

<sup>5</sup> The number of special education child-level surveys estimates approximately two students per special education teacher in each school, in the kindergarten round.

<sup>6</sup> This row includes teachers of off-grade students, as well as first-grade teachers.

<sup>7</sup> Respondent activities do not include completion of an instrument. Instead, time is estimated for such activities as review of study recruitment letters and fact sheets, meetings to discuss participation in the study, and discussions with school recruiters or team leaders. Based on the ECLS-K:2011 experience, it is estimated that approximately half of the transfer schools identified in this round will be located in new districts, that is districts that were not originally sampled for the ECLS-K:2024.

## A.13 Estimates of Cost to Respondents

There are no costs to respondents to participate in the ECLS-K:2024 kindergarten or first-grade data collections, or first-grade advance school contact, beyond the time needed for individuals to complete study-related activities. No equipment, printing, or postage charges will be incurred by the participants.

## A.14 Cost to the Federal Government

The sampling, recruitment, and data collection activities for the ECLS-K:2024 national rounds are being carried out under NCES contract number 91990019C0002 with Westat. The period of performance for this ECLS-K:2024 contract runs from January 4, 2019 through January 3, 2029. This contract includes all currently-planned pilot/field tests and national data collections for the ECLS-K:2024. The total cost to the federal government for contractor and subcontractor costs for this contract as of July 2024 is \$77,653,850.<sup>45</sup> This cost estimate includes all data collection activities, design enhancements, and data file delivery and documentation for the noted rounds. Table A-7 provides costs to NCES for kindergarten and first-grade data collections, as well as the fall 2024 advance school contact for the spring 2025 (i.e., first-grade) round.

<sup>45</sup> As of July 2024, several optional tasks have also been exercised on this contract, at a total additional value of \$2,375,577.

Table A-7. Costs to NCES for the ECLS-K:2024 kindergarten and first-grade data collections and advance school contact

<b>Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 Kindergarten</b>	
<b>Data Collections</b>	
NCES salaries and expenses	\$187,000
Contract costs	\$29,188,420
<i>Instrumentation and materials</i>	\$2,173,144
<i>Data Collection</i>	\$21,772,105
<i>Systems and data processing</i>	\$5,243,171
<b>Spring 2025 First-Grade Data</b>	
<b>Collections</b>	
NCES salaries and expenses	\$187,000
Contract costs	\$15,566,113
<i>Instrumentation and materials</i>	\$1,782,315
<i>Data Collection</i>	\$10,541,344
<i>Systems and data processing</i>	\$3,242,454
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$45,128,533</b>

## A.15 Reasons for Changes in Burden

This request is a revision under the ECLS kindergarten cohorts data collection program and the requested estimated burden reflects no increase in respondent burden since the last revision (v.30). The total estimated burden hours is 84,093.

## A.16 Publication Plans and Time Schedule

Information relevant to the kindergarten and first-grade data collections will be summarized in restricted- and public-use data manuals, psychometric reports, and methodology reports. Current national data collection, data release, and report release schedules are provided in table A-8.

Table A-8. ECLS-K:2024 kindergarten and first-grade data collection, data release, and report release schedules

Data collection round	Dates of field work	Anticipated first release of data, associated technical documentation, and first findings report
Fall kindergarten national collection	August-January 2024 <sup>1</sup>	<a href="#">Dec-2025</a> <a href="#">Winter 2026</a>
Spring kindergarten national collection	March-July 2024	<a href="#">Dec-2025</a> <a href="#">Winter 2026</a>
Spring first-grade national collection	March-July 2025	<a href="#">Dec-2026</a> <a href="#">Winter 2027</a>
Third-grade <a href="#">pilot-instrument tests</a> <sup>2</sup>	<del>March</del> <a href="#">February</a> -June 2026	N/A
Spring third-grade national collection	March-July 2027	<a href="#">Dec-2028</a> <a href="#">Winter 2029</a>

<sup>1</sup>In order to meet parent and teacher survey production goals, the field period for those respondents remained open until mid-January 2024. The child assessments concluded in mid-December 2023.

<sup>2</sup>NCES is currently determining if any instrument tests (i.e., cognitive labs) are required prior to the third-grade round. If these are included in the study design, permission to conduct them will be part of a future OMB package.

## **A.17 Approval for Not Displaying the Expiration Date for OMB Approval**

No exemption from the requirement to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection is being requested for the ECLS-K:2024 kindergarten and first-grade data collections or advance school contact.

## **A.18 Exceptions to the Certification Statement**

No exceptions to the certification statement apply to the ECLS-K:2024 kindergarten and first-grade data collections or advance school contact.