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Baseline Evaluation – Second Early-Grade Reading Intervention Information Sheet and Consent Form for School Principal

Who we are

Hello! I am _____. I am working in a project undertaken by Social Data Collectors (SDC) and JET Education Services (JET). SDC/JET is a data collection consortium contracted to collect information for the Second Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS II).

What we are doing

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) with support from the Mpumalanga Education Department asked SDC/JET to evaluate the success of two reading interventions that DBE developed. The interventions are going to be implemented in a random sample of 100 primary schools in Mpumalanga Province. Grade 1 learners will benefit in 2017 as well as in Grade 2 in 2018. There are also 80 control schools. We as evaluators do not know if a school is a project or a control school. This serves to keep the evaluation “blind” (independent). DBE itself will inform schools of their role and participation. From each sampled school, the school principal, the Grade 1 teachers and a random sample of 20 Grade 1 learners are now asked to participate in the baseline evaluation. This will mainly comprise completion of brief background questionnaires, and a short English exercise for the teachers. Individual oral language assessment with 20 randomly sampled Grade 1 learners (12-15 minutes each) is also planned. The evaluation is designed to tell us how successful the interventions are. The focus is on improved early acquisition of English as First Additional Language among Grade 1 and Grade 2 learners to improve English reading and literacy proficiency. The evaluation hopes to find out if the abovementioned interventions are effective and affordable enough to implement in the rest of the primary schools in the country.

Your participation

We are asking you as school principal to provide some background information that may underpin the teaching of reading in your school by completing a brief questionnaire. You may also choose to ask one of your school management team members to complete the information to specific questions. Completion of the whole questionnaire should not take longer than 20-30 minutes. The questions are mainly about conditions and activities that may enhance or hinder the teaching of reading and language at the school. Should it become quite clear if or which interventions are very successful, the DBE, given available funding, intends extending them to teachers and learners in more schools. This will first involve the control schools, and then other schools in Mpumalanga Province and even nationally. With your permission, we also hope to administer the intended evaluation instruments with some learners, teachers and parents from your school, including administering simple reading assessments to learners.

Please understand that **your participation is voluntary** and that you are not being forced to take part in this evaluation. The choice of whether to participate or not, is yours alone. If you choose not to take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may stop participating in the evaluation at any time and tell me that you don't want to continue. If you do this, there will be no penalties and nothing will happen to you. The same applies should there be specific questions you do not want to respond to.

Confidentiality

Identifying information such as coded ID numbers and lists of names will be kept in a locked cabinet or office. It will not be available to others, and will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the Human Research Ethics Committee at University of Witwatersrand. (All of these people are required to keep your



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identity confidential). Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. If needed, we will ask for your permission in future at the appropriate time. For data sets at school, teacher, learner and parent level, only coded identity numbers will appear on password-protected computers.

Risks/discomforts

We do not see large risks in your participation. However, you may feel embarrassed about physical conditions at your school, or fear criticism about management or teaching practices at your school, or the knowledge or skills that you have. We undertake to handle all your information confidentially and anonymously, and for the purposes of this evaluation only. We will not share identifiable evaluation information with anyone else, especially not other Department officials at the circuit, district, provincial or national offices. A key purpose of the interventions is to help everyone improve the quality of reading teaching and learning at schools.

Benefits

The main purpose of the project in 2017 and 2018 is to improve Grade 1 and 2 learners' reading proficiency through teacher interventions in the project schools. The aim is to help teachers enhance their subject knowledge and teaching skills. Such teacher changes are very likely to have a positive impact on learners' reading proficiency and achievement.

The project, with its ongoing evaluation, is designed in such a way that regular information will be available to intervention service providers working in each school. After completion of the mid-term evaluation by November 2017 and the full evaluation by November 2018, the findings will be made available as soon as possible at concluding seminars and in official reports to the DBE and senior education officials of Mpumalanga Province. Schools will form part of such dissemination. The research and evaluation team also intends to publish its findings in peer-reviewed academic journals. The identity or names of schools, principals, teachers, parents or learners will never be attached to any of the information that you provide, or the information released through articles.

Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns

This research was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at University of Witwatersrand. If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please call the Wits Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), on Tel 011 717 1408 or at the following e-mail address: Lucille.Mooragan@wits.ac.za.

If you have concerns or questions about the evaluation, you may call the project leader, Ms Janeli Kotze, at Tel: 012 357 3200 | Call Centre: 0800 202 933 or email at Kotze.J@dbe.gov.za.



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CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in the reading intervention evaluation by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) with support from the Mpumalanga Education Department. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively. I understand that the project to which this evaluation is tied may only in 2017 and 2018 benefit the project schools and their teachers and learners, but not the control schools. I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

I hereby acknowledge that teachers, parents and learners from my school will be approached, as explained to me, to participate in evaluating the reading interventions.

I understand that the information that I provide will be stored electronically and that evaluation findings will be communicated to senior DBE managers and through articles in academic journals without making known my identity or that of the school, its teachers, learners or parents.

Signature of School Principal

Date

Additional signature, if required

Date

(School Management Team member or Personal Assistant)

(if required, specify other designations)
