Dear Teacher Educator,

The Child Research and Study Center at the University at Albany has an extensive history of research into approaches to prevent reading difficulties through interventions with children and professional development for primary grade teachers. This research has demonstrated that most early reading difficulties can be prevented. Last year, we completed work on a development project funded by the US Department of Education that allowed us to collaborate with 10 pre-service teacher educators from across New York State in the development of course materials based on the professional development program we had been using with in-service teachers. In addition, the project included an evaluation of whether pre-service teachers benefited from the inclusion of components of the professional development program in their pre-service course work.

We have recently received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education through the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE) which will allow us to make these resources more widely available to teacher educators across New York State and to evaluate the impact of their use on teacher education students’ knowledge and skills as they complete their teacher education program. A full description of the project is provided in the attached, enclosed Description of the Early Literacy Teacher Education Project.

We are currently canvassing faculty members from teacher education programs across New York State in hopes of enrolling approximately 10 institutions in this project. Eligibility for enrollment will be determined in accord with the criteria outlined in the Selection of Participant Institution section of the Description. As you’ll note, the willingness of faculty members to have their institution/program involved in the project is a major selection criterion. It is important to note that faculty members’ decisions with regard to participation need to be completely voluntary and will be kept in the strictest confidence. If your institution expresses enough interest in the project to warrant an official “vote”, the Early Literacy Teacher Education Project will institute a confidential, online poll of the faculty to assess level of support for the project.

Because this project is particularly focused on supporting adjunct, graduate assistant, and new professors, the “vote” will involve all current teacher educators and will ask for a decision on each of two questions:

1. Do you agree to your institution’s/program’s involvement in the project?

2. Do you wish to participate in the project by engaging in the webinar series and utilizing some of the project resources in your courses?
This will allow an institution to be eligible for participation without highly experienced teacher educators feeling the need to become involved.

In answering this poll, respondents will also be asked to indicate their role in the institution (e.g., adjunct, graduate assistant, lecturer, assistant professor, etc.) so that we can determine whether there is sufficient interest among the targeted groups to warrant enrolling the program in the project. A printed example of the poll can be found on the next page.

**Risks and Benefits**

To insure that research participants are fully informed about the impact that participation might have on them, we are required to provide a statement about potential risks and benefits of participation. We do not anticipate that your participation will put you at risk in any way. Further, we hope that involvement as a participant will contribute to your effectiveness in preparing teachers to teacher beginning and struggling readers by providing you with instructional resources and the opportunity to participate in a professional learning community focused on these topics.

**Your Rights as a Participant**

Note that our Institutional Review Board (IRB), the organization charged with protecting the rights of research participants requires that all participants be informed of the following:

- Your participation in this project is voluntary. Even after you agree to participate in the research or sign the informed consent document, you may decide to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise have been entitled. We will retain and analyze the information you have provided up until the point you have left the study unless you request that your data be excluded from any analysis and/or destroyed. You can withdraw from the study and/or request that your data be removed by contacting us via email at crsc@albany.edu or by phone at 518-442-3770.

- All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In addition, the Institutional Review Board, the sponsor of the study (e.g. FIPSE) and University or government officials responsible for monitoring this study may inspect these records.

Since this research involves data collection over the internet, we are also required to inform you that:

- This project has been approved by the University at Albany Institutional Review Board. Approval of this project only signifies that the procedures adequately protect the rights and welfare of the participants. Please note that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access. Please be sure to close your browser when finished so no one will be able to see what you have been doing.
You will be reimbursed for your involvement at a rate of $30 per hour and, if you choose to leave the study part way through, you will be reimbursed for all of the activities you completed at the time you discontinue.

We will be conducting an informational webinar for your institution if we receive a request to do so. The webinar will provide faculty with the opportunity to ask questions about the project. However, you should also feel free to contact project personnel directly either via email at crsc@albany.edu or by phone at (518) 442-3770. You may also choose to contact individual co-investigators on the project by emailing us directly (see email addresses beneath the signatures below). If you’d like, we can also provide you with names of teacher educators who participated in our previous project.

We greatly appreciate the time you have already taken to consider this project and hope that we will have the opportunity to work with your institution on this important project.

Sincerely,

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The Institutional Review Board at the University at Albany reviews all research projects conducted through the University, to ensure that the rights and well-being of the participants in the project are protected. This project has been reviewed by the board and found to be in compliance with guidelines for protecting participants' rights and well-being. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or if you wish to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University at Albany's Office of Regulatory Research Compliance at 800-365-9139 or crrc@uamail.albany.edu.
Sample of Consent Form that will be completed initially as part of an online poll and submitted in writing if the institution becomes a participant in the project.

DO NOT COMPLETE THIS FORM AT THIS TIME.

Teacher Educator Consent Form

1. Do you agree to your institution’s involvement in the Early Literacy Teacher Education Project?

______ I DO NOT agree to my institution’s involvement in the Early Literacy Teacher Education Project.

______ I AGREE to my institution’s involvement in the Early Literacy Teacher Education Project and attest that my decision was made completely voluntarily. I understand that:

- students will be required to take the online Knowledge of Literacy Instruction survey at the beginning and end of their teacher education program
- I may need to include taking the survey as a course requirement if I am teaching one or both of the courses in which it is to be administered.
- I will not have access to these data for individual students but that the data will be used in an aggregated form to evaluate how our students’ knowledge related to early literacy development changes during the course of their entire program.

2. Do you wish to participate in the project by engaging in the webinar series and utilizing some of the project resources in your courses?

______ I DO NOT wish to participate in the project

______ Yes, I have read the information about this study. I hereby consent to participate in the study.

If you agree to participate in the project, you are also indicating your understanding of the expectations and parameters of the project including that:

- You have read the Project Description for the Early Literacy Teacher Education Project as well as the Teacher Educator Information Letter and the Student Information Letter.
- Only institutions with the substantial degree of faculty support for the project will be eligible
- You understand that you will receive $30/hour for your participation in the webinar series and related survey activities.

If your institution is selected for this project, you are willing to:

- Respond to an initial online survey concerning your teaching experience at the elementary, secondary, and college level
• Participate in the 40 hour webinar series related to the Early Literacy Teacher Education Project
• Provide feedback on both the content of the webinar series and your experiences as a participant
• Report on the Early Literacy Teacher Education Project content that you utilize in your course(s).
• Provide class lists for the literacy courses that you teach during the project period so that we can relate exposure to the content and student survey results.

Further you are indicating your understanding that:

• Your participation in this project is completely voluntary.
• Any data derived from your participation in the project will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. While others at your institution will know whether or not you are participating, no data gathered from your participation will be shared back to the institution. Any findings from the research will only be disseminated in aggregate fashion, such that individual teacher educators and their institutions cannot be identified.
• You are free to withdraw from participation at any time. If you choose to withdraw from participation in this research at any time, we will utilize any data that you have provided up until that time UNLESS you specifically request that the data be destroyed.
• You will be asked to submit a written and signed copy of this consent form if your institution is ultimately selected for participation.

If you agree to participate, please complete the following:

Name ______________________________ Signature ______________________________

Program ______________________________ Date ______________________________

E-mail ______________________________ Institution ______________________________

Status in program (e.g., full-time faculty, lecturer, adjunct, etc.) ______________________________

Phone (W) ______________________________ Phone (C) ______________________________

Mailing Address ______________________________

Names and Course numbers for courses you teach within the target teacher education program.

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Note: We will mail you two copies of the paper version if you agree to participate. You should keep one for your files and return the second, signed copy to us.