September 5, 2006

NOTE on revised procedures for PISA to support participation and response rates

Per our phone conversation, regarding how we might increase the participation rate of the original schools in our PISA sample, in particular those schools that we consider to be final refusals, we have revised our incentive plan. The purpose of this revised plan is to be as flexible as possible with the needs of the school in order to encourage the refusing schools to reconsider participating in PISA. Our revised plan is as follows:

1. Offer refusing original sample schools $1,500. This amount is equivalent to the amount that they would have received if they had participated in the summer conference that we conducted for the purpose of maintaining schools in the study. Schools could use this money in the manner that they consider the most appropriate for supporting their school programs and the implementation of PISA. For example, schools may wish to use the money in some of the following ways:

    - Provide funds for professional development (such as supporting attendance at the National Science Teachers' Association conference or a similar conference);
    - Purchase science laboratory equipment, perhaps a digital microscope;
    - Purchase video conferencing equipment that could be used to network with other schools;
    - Purchase computer equipment or software;
    - Provide funds for a field trip or student activity; or
    - Increase the amount that is given to the school coordinator.

    Schools may also choose to select a combination of activities, or propose activities that we have not thought of.

2. In addition, RTI will work to reduce the burden on schools even more than they currently do. They will, for example, limit their request to schools, and ask them to provide only the list of 15-year-olds for sampling (and RTI will reimburse them for constructing the list). Then, RTI would make all other arrangements - contacting students, gaining parental permission, and renting space in a library or hotel ballroom during non-school hours to administer the test. RTI recognizes that many schools may be

reluctant to give them contact information for selected students, however, the offer will still be made.

3. RTI will request NCES to either make calls to refusing districts or to solicit the help of organizations that endorsed PISA. NCES or endorsing organizations will stress the importance of participation as it relates to the need to meet international criteria for response rates. We will stress that without sufficient participation, we will be unable to have our data included in the international tables.

Our current rate of participation of original schools is 67.5%. This just barely meets the minimum OECD requirement of 65%. We hope that with these additional measures we will increase the participation of original schools.