

Frequently Asked Questions for Districts and Schools

Efficacy Study of the Houghton Mifflin *Math Expressions* Program

Cobblestone Applied Research & Evaluation, Inc. will be conducting a research study of the Houghton Mifflin *Math Expressions* curriculum during the 2011-12 school year. The following is a list of questions about the study. Please feel free to contact us via phone or email with additional questions about the study.

1. **What is *Math Expressions*?** *Math Expressions* is an innovative program that interweaves abstract mathematical concepts with everyday experiences of students. Through the program students learn math and have fun by using objects, drawing, working with other students, connecting math to daily life, and helping classmates learn. Please visit <http://www.eduplace.com/math/mthexp/> to find out more about the program.
2. **Why is Cobblestone, Inc. conducting this study?** Under No Child Left Behind, textbook publishers are required to demonstrate that their programs are “scientifically based.” To objectively evaluate their math program, Houghton Mifflin has hired an external research firm (Cobblestone) to conduct an experimental study of their program to find how the Houghton Mifflin *Math Expressions* program affects student achievement in mathematics.
3. **Who is participating in the research study?** Several teachers and their students from schools throughout the U.S. are participating at the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. Participants include those teachers and their students that are in the “treatment” group (using the *Math Expressions* program) and the “control” group (using the existing mathematics program at their school).
4. **How do you determine who uses the new program or not?** To participate in the study, the research team will randomly assign teachers (and consequently the students they teach) to use the *Math Expressions* program or use what is currently in place at the school. Each school must have at least two teachers at each of the target grade levels so that at least one teacher will be assigned to the treatment group and one to the control group at each grade.
5. **Why don't all teachers and students use the *Math Expressions* program?** To meet the highest standards of scientific evidence, The US Department of Education's *What Works Clearinghouse* (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>) requires that we conduct an experimental study where all participants are randomly assigned. This means that only some students and teachers participating in the experiment will use the *Math Expressions* program, while others must use a comparison mathematics program. This type of experimental design gives us the most confidence that any differences in student achievement are due to the program under investigation and not another cause.
6. **How will this study be conducted at our school?** Participating students will complete a norm-referenced assessment as a pretest (before beginning mathematics instruction) and as a posttest (about one month before the school year ends). Both treatment and control

students will complete the pretest and posttest. Schools will also provide state test mathematic scores for all participating students. Some classrooms will also be selected to be observed by members of the research team.

7. **How do parents give permission for students to participate?** Teachers will send home parent consent forms. Passive parent consent forms will be used in which children will automatically participate in the study unless specifically opted out by a parent.
8. **How is participant information protected?** All names will remain confidential, and identification numbers will be assigned to all students. The data will remain locked in a filing cabinet where only the research team will have access to the files. No individual teacher, student, or school will be identified in reports about the *Math Expressions* program.
9. **What are the benefits of participating?** Schools will receive free *Math Expressions* textbooks and materials for their classrooms for participating in the study. In addition, the school district, teachers, and their students benefit from participating by contributing to the broader knowledge base regarding mathematics instruction. The study has no anticipated risks to participating students, teachers, schools or districts.



For more information about the study or eligibility requirements, please contact:

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