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September 30, 2008

Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington DC 20503

We are writing in support of the proposed use of teacher incentives as a recruitment strategy for the evaluation of the Brain Power! Challenge, a science-based middle school curriculum designed by Danya International, Inc. to promote students' interest in science while supporting efforts aimed at substance abuse prevention.

Westat has more than 45 years experience in all facets of conducting research and program evaluations, including participant recruitment. We have worked extensively with K-12 schools collecting data on a variety of education-related programs. In our experience, school districts have become increasingly reluctant to approve external research requests given understandable concerns about teacher and student privacy, and a desire to focus their time and attention on matters pertaining to instruction.

In general, Westat takes a multifaceted approach to address district concerns and obtain research approval, including complete and clear explanation of the study, assurances of confidentiality, and the dissemination of research findings at the district and school levels. However, an important recruitment and retention strategy involves the use of incentives to not only encourage schools to enroll in our research studies, but once enrolled, maintain full participation. Westat worked as a subcontractor on the Reading First Impact Study, which included a study of the effect of such incentives on survey response rates for teachers. The results of the incentive sub-study indicated that incentives significantly increased response rates.

Westat has regularly used incentives as a way to encourage districts and schools to participate and to compensate participants for their time and effort.

- Our evaluation of Macmillan McGraw-Hill's trio of reading programs —*Treasures*, *Triumphs*, and *Treasure Chest*—provides teachers with a \$500 voucher for instructional materials in return for completing a series of teacher logs and teacher surveys, and participating in site visits.
- In accordance with district policy, Westat provided Montgomery County, Maryland middle school teachers with a monetary incentive to complete a post-program survey as part of our evaluation of the National Institute of Standards and Technology's Pilot Summer Institute.
- The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey uses monetary incentives to facilitate participation given the extensive nature of the survey interviews and health examinations.

Due to the voluntary nature of this study, the time commitment involved on the part of schools and teachers, and the sensitive topic addressed on the Student Attitudes Questionnaire, we find it necessary in this case to offer teacher-level incentives to bring districts and schools on board. Teachers are being asked to learn a new program, implement it with their students over a six week period, complete a survey, and participate in a classroom observation if randomly selected to do so. Westat is also asking schools to permit evaluators to use class time to administer the pre- and post-program surveys to participating students. For these reasons, we ask that OMB approve Danya's request to use teacher incentives in their recruitment of middle schools.

Thank you for your consideration,

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Project Director, Westat

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Principal Investigator, Westat