



**JESSE BACON, SUPERINTENDENT**

ADRIENNE USHER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

BRANDY HOWARD, CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

TROY WOOD, CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER

TO: Dr. Jesse Bacon, Superintendent

FROM: Dr. Amy Compton, Director of Secondary Education

RE: COMMONLIT, Inc Memorandum of Understanding

DATE: May 20, 2025

Please see the attached Memorandum of Understanding between Bullitt County Public Schools and COMMONLIT, Inc. Middle school students will receive English Language Arts resources and will participate in a 2 year research study for student growth.

This contract has been reviewed by Dinsmore & Shohl LLP. Please approve this contract at the June Board Meeting.

**OUR MISSION IS TO INSPIRE AND EQUIP OUR STUDENTS TO SUCCEED IN LIFE**

**BULLITT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS AN EQUAL EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT INSTITUTION**

**Memorandum of  
Understanding for**

**COMMONLIT 360**

**QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL  
STUDY**

**BULLITT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**and**

**COMMONLIT INC.**

**and**

**CONSORTIUM FOR POLICY RESEARCH  
IN EDUCATION, Teachers College,  
Columbia University (CPRE-TC)**

BULLITT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (the "District"), the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University (the "Research Firm"), and CommonLit Inc. ("CommonLit") agree to work together on the CommonLit 360 Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grant quasi-experimental study (the "Project") as set forth in this Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU"). This MOU shall be in effect from Agreement Signing Date through December 31, 2028 (or as may be extended by agreement by the parties).

This MOU is not intended to supersede or replace the Subaward Contract nor the Mutual Nondisclosure Agreement entered between the Research Firm and CommonLit, which shall remain in full force and effect at all times.

## Statement of Purpose

CommonLit's mission as a free and open educational resource is to provide high-quality, research-backed literacy resources that are accessible to all students, particularly those in Title I and under-resourced schools. Our goal is to close the literacy achievement gap and ensure all students have access to quality literacy education they deserve. While CommonLit has shown strong evidence of correlation between usage of the curriculum and higher student literacy gains, the proposed research represents an exciting opportunity for CommonLit to produce its first piece of causal evidence of the impact of CommonLit 360 on student reading achievement.

The primary objective of this research is to evaluate the efficacy of CommonLit's full-year English Language Arts curriculum by conducting a rigorous, two-year quasi-experimental study that meets the What Works Clearinghouse standards with reservations. The study will focus on grades 6-8. The District will identify middle schools to start using the CommonLit 360 core curriculum program. Data will be collected throughout the two year study period.

A successful study would allow both the District and CommonLit to better understand CommonLit 360's impact on student reading gains and teacher practice. It will also produce evidence of CommonLit 360's positive impact on student literacy that meets the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Tier 2 or Moderate standards. Ultimately, this study will help improve literacy education for the millions of students and teachers who access resources on CommonLit daily by providing insight into what leads to measurable and positive reading outcomes for students. Long-term societal impacts are the benefits achieved through improved literacy rates.

The CommonLit 360 program consists of a free full-year English Language Arts Curriculum, benchmark assessments, and integrated professional development. The curriculum includes robust and diverse texts, and builds on students' literacy skills through reading, writing, discussion, and vocabulary around engaging essential questions. The benchmark assessments provide teachers with standards-based data to monitor student reading growth throughout the year. The integrated professional development includes on-demand modules embedded into the platform, as well as quarterly live, virtual professional learning sessions to support educators in implementing the curriculum.

## Participants

- Middle school teachers implementing CommonLit 360's ELA program with their students in Grades 6-8 at the following schools that agree to participate in the study.
- Please list the names of the participating schools here:
  - Bernheim Middle School
  - Bullitt Lick Middle School

- Eastside Middle School
- Hebron Middle School
- Mt. Washington Middle School
- Zoneton Middle School

## Incentives

By participating in the study, the District will gain a better understanding of the impact of the CommonLit 360 program on students' literacy achievement. CommonLit and the Research Firm will share overall study results with the District and provide custom data analysis reports for the District to provide insight into the benefits of the CommonLit 360 program for the District's students.

By becoming a study partner, participating middle schools in the District will receive:

- Free CommonLit School Essentials PRO Plus for two academic school years (2025-26 and 2026-27) for participating middle schools. CommonLit School Essentials PRO Plus includes:
  - Access to CommonLit Digital Library and CommonLit 360 Curriculum, including the 360 Unit Skills Assessments, for students, teachers, and administrators
  - Access to CommonLit Assessment Series and its administrator data dashboard for teachers and administrators
  - Virtual upfront training for teachers and administrators ("introductory webinars") to be scheduled prior to the start of the study launch year (2025-26)
  - Ongoing professional development support through quarterly virtual trainings and on-demand training modules
  - Rostering and LMS integration and support services for districts already using ClassLink, Clever or Canvas integration
  - Dedicated account manager
  - Priority user support
- Additional incentives exclusive to study partners:
  - Free custom data analysis reports for the District from the Research Firm and CommonLit after study year 1 and study year 2 (valued at \$5,000+ per report)
  - Gift cards for teachers completing surveys
  - Gift cards for one designated school liaison at each school serving as lead point of contact coordinating the completion of study activities

## Measures and Data Collection

The Research Firm will work with the District to schedule and obtain the following for students and teachers in the participating schools, using a secure means of data transmittal and adhering to any district-specific research protocols:

### Roster Data (Deidentified)

-School Years: 2025-26 and 2026-27

- School name
- ELA course and section
- ELA teacher email address used to access CommonLit
- Student email addresses used to access CommonLit
- Unique student identifier

### Student Demographic and Achievement Data (Deidentified)

-School Years: Four years prior to the start of study (2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25 school years) and two years during the study (2025-26, and 2026-27 school years)

- Unique student identifier
- Grade
- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- English language learner status
- Free and reduced-price school meal status
- Special education status
- Disability classification(s) such as dyslexia
- State standardized end-of-year ELA assessment scaled scores and performance levels

### Teacher Survey Data

-School Years: 2025-26 and 2026-27 (Fall and Spring)

- The Research Firm will administer 15-minute online surveys to teachers about their backgrounds, teaching practices, preparedness and confidence for teaching literacy, professional learning, program usage, perceptions of program content, teacher engagement and buy-in related to the program, and perceptions of impact on student achievement.

### Case Study School Data

-School Years: 2025-26 and 2026-27 (Spring)

- The Research Firm will coordinate with the District to identify 1-2 potential case study schools per district. Case study participation is entirely voluntary. If schools are interested in participating as case study sites, the Research Firm will conduct in-person or virtual interviews with school leaders and a subset of teachers during the first study year to gain insight into their experiences with the CommonLit 360 program, probing for early strengths and challenges. Follow-up interviews conducted during the second study year will continue to focus on educators' perceptions of the CommonLit 360 program and their plans for future use of the curriculum in the post-study period. Interviews will be semi-structured and last approximately 45 minutes. Where possible, the Research Firm will also conduct one-day site visits to case study schools, which will provide additional context for the information gleaned during interviews.

# **Responsibilities of CommonLit, the District, and the Research Firm**

CommonLit and the District agree to meet the following responsibilities for the Project:

## **CommonLit shall:**

- Provide participating middle schools with access to CommonLit School Essentials PRO Plus (includes the CommonLit 360 curriculum, CommonLit Assessment Series, ongoing professional development and technology integration services, and a dedicated CommonLit account manager) during the two-year study period (2025-26 and 2026-27)
- Work with the building principals, assistant principals, literacy specialists, and teachers to schedule and provide upfront CommonLit 360 training and professional development sessions during the two year study period (2025-26 and 2026-27)
- Share back-end program software usage and performance data with the Research Firm.
- Comply with FERPA requirements to maintain all personally identifiable student and staff data as confidential. CommonLit shall only share such personally identifiable student and staff data to third parties in connection with the Project, and shall not disclose it to any third party except as necessary for the execution of the Project.
- Provide a secure means for transmittal of data to and from CommonLit.

## **The District shall:**

- Maintain an ongoing collaboration with CommonLit staff to plan and maintain school-level implementation of the CommonLit 360 program, including:
  - Assist with scheduling virtual upfront training for teachers and administrators ("introductory webinars") prior to the start of the 2025-26 school year
  - Provide administrator and teacher support for implementing the CommonLit 360 curriculum with fidelity
  - Allow teachers to receive ongoing professional development support through quarterly virtual trainings and on-demand training modules
  - Assist with scheduling the administration of the CommonLit Assessment Series in the fall and spring of the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years
- Maintain an ongoing collaboration with the Research Firm to fulfill the study activities, including:
  - Assist with scheduling the administration of online teacher surveys in the fall and spring of each study year
  - Assist with identifying 1-2 potential case study schools to participate in virtual or in-person teacher and administrator interviews in the spring of each study year
  - Share the deidentified student data listed on the Measures and Data Collection page, using a secure means of transmittal provided by the Research Firm

FERPA contains an exception to the consent requirement when data is shared with a third party for research purposes. However, if the District deems necessary, it shall obtain any and all necessary consents in connection with the provision of the Data and shall confirm to CommonLit in writing which students may participate based on the consents the District has collected.

**The Research Firm shall:**

The Research Firm shall do the following, in accordance with the agreement between the Research Firm and CommonLit, which shall govern in the event of a conflict.

- Work with school administrators to administer online teacher surveys in the fall and spring of each study year.
- Comply with FERPA requirements to maintain confidentiality of all personally identifiable data and destroy all personally identifiable data after the study is over.
- Analyze student assessment data, teacher survey data, and teacher and student program usage data.
- Collaborate with CommonLit to prepare a custom data analysis report and presentation for the District.
- Provide a secure means for transmittal of data to and from CommonLit and the District.

# **Data Confidentiality and Security**

## **Research Firm:**

The Data will be provided by BULLITT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS to the Research Firm through a password-protected Google Drive folder or Virtual Private Network (VPN). This Data will be used to evaluate the success of CommonLit's reading program through its impact on participant students.

The data will be stored on Teachers College's secure Google Drive. Only members of the research team will have access to the data. Teachers College, Columbia University will take the following data security measures: (1) use anti-malware protections and automatic software updates; (2) disable file and media sharing when not needed; (3) delete old files from cloud-based backups and local hard drives; (4) take care of privacy settings immediately upon setup; and (5) store all hard copies in a locked cabinet.

The Research Firm will securely store all data for five years after it is collected, at which point Teachers College Google Administrators will permanently destroy all data files.

## **CommonLit:**

CommonLit acknowledges that any unauthorized disclosure of confidential student information is a violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and the implementing regulations found in 34 CFR Part 99 and shall not be permitted to occur. Accordingly, all parties acknowledge and assure that all Data shall be aggregated in such a way that no individual will be identified directly or by deduction in any published reports, electronic or otherwise. This agreement further acknowledges and assures that the student- and teacher-level Data elements will not be released to any party other than authorized, vetted data analytics and research partners.

While in possession of the Data, CommonLit acknowledges and agrees that it shall permit access only to its employees and service providing contractors, in each case, who are authorized to assist with conducting a research evaluation of the program. All CommonLit employees and service providing contractors who are authorized to have access to the Data have, or will, prior to gaining access to the Data, agree to abide by CommonLit confidentiality and data security protocols.

CommonLit also agrees to store the Data in a secure and locked area and to prevent unauthorized access. CommonLit and its approved contractors agree to destroy all student-level Data files 5 years after it is collected.



## TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

All information that BULLITT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS provided to CommonLit is subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. CommonLit acknowledges that the information is confidential and shall exercise due diligence and all reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of the information and to not disclose the information other than aggregate findings for program evaluation and research reporting purposes, as stated above. Aggregate findings may be disseminated in scholarly venues, such as professional conferences or journals;
2. The information will only be used to assess the impact of the program on participating students and for internal continuous improvement of CommonLit materials and assessments;
3. All CommonLit and Research Firm personnel granted access to the information shall certify in writing that he/she has read, understands and agrees to abide by the provisions of CommonLit's data security and privacy policies;
4. If CommonLit has reason to believe that any client level information has been disclosed to someone other than personnel authorized pursuant to this DSA, or that information has been or may be used for any purposes other than what is outlined in this DSA, CommonLit shall, within forty-eight (48) hours, inform BULLITT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS of all facts concerning such disclosure or usage and take all necessary steps to stop such disclosure or usage of information;

District contact for notice:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

5. All data and study findings included in any research reports or publications will be presented in aggregate form and in such a fashion as to protect the confidentiality of participants and schools.

# Project Contacts

## BULLITT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## COMMONLIT

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## CONSORTIUM FOR POLICY RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

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This MOU is accepted and agreed upon by the parties as of the Agreement Signing Date:

**BULLITT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMONLIT**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: Julia Febiger  
Title: VP Research and Evaluation

**CONSORTIUM FOR POLICY RESEARCH IN EDUCATION**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: Douglas Ready, Ph.D.  
Title: Director, CPRE-TC & Professor of Education and Public Policy