

## Two Year Evaluation of Somali Dual Language Instruction

### Summary

In 2016, Portland Public Schools (PPS) launched a one-of-a-kind Somali language class at the elementary school level. PPS implemented this new class in response to a report released the year before, which showed that Somali students were greatly falling behind their peers across many indicators. Notably, while district wide graduation rates for the class of 2013-2014 was 70%, graduation rates for Somali students was only 58%. The new dual language instruction (DLI) class is unique because the curriculum is the first of its kind to include both the dominant Somali language, Somali Maxaa, as well as the Somali Bantu language, Maay-Maay, spoken by a minority community within Somalia. It is important that these programs meet the intended goals of improving Somali student performance, because educational attainment is a strong predictor of immigrant integration and socioeconomic progress later in life. We expect this new curriculum will evolve over time, this assessment is a first step towards making sure the instructors are empowered to make necessary adjustments so the program can be effective.

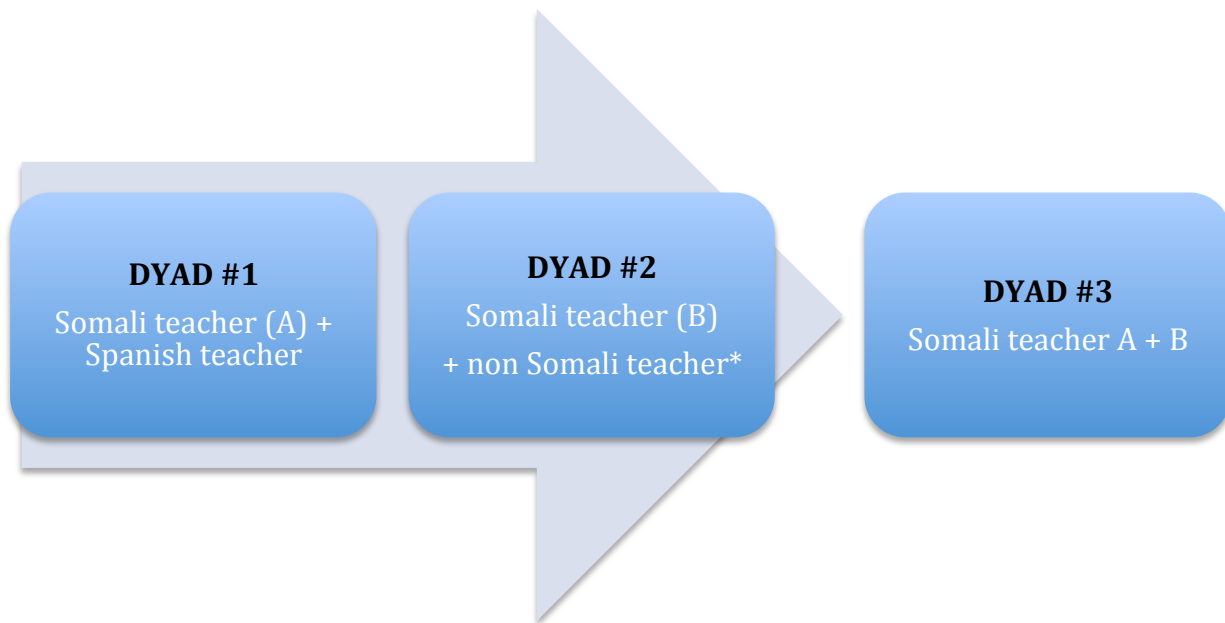
The purpose of this research is to conduct a check-in with the two new Somali DLI instructors two years into this new program in order to assess their preparedness and level of support they are receiving from the community, their colleagues and the administration. This research will consist of three dyadic interviews, including both Somali instructors as well as other DLI instructors working at PPS. With this design, we believe the participants can share and compare their experiences. The research questions for this project include: 1) How are these instructors designing their curriculum? 2) What are some of the challenges PPS DLI teachers face? 3) In what ways do PPS DLI instructors feel supported? 4) How do dual language instructors perceive their work in the context of addressing immigrant children's ability to succeed in school?

## Design

### Research objectives

PPS reported in 2015, that Somali students are struggling in school, this research will evaluate to what extent the proposed intervention of a dual language instruction class is addressing this problem. This research is viewed as both a program evaluation as well as an opportunity for instructors to learn from fellow dual language instructor colleagues. There are three primary objectives of this research: 1) To evaluate student progress in Portland Public School's new Somali dual language instruction class after its first two years; 2) Assess to what extent the instructors are equipped and supported in their work; and 3) Collect information on how this program can improve moving forward. The first objective will be addressed by combining the findings of the interviews with data on the performance of the class. The dyadic interviews proposed here will independently address the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> objectives.

### Data gathering techniques



\* Non-Somali DLI teacher may include any of the following: Russian, Japanese, Chinese, and Vietnamese

This research will consist of three dyadic interviews total as shown in the figure above: two heterogeneous pairs of dyadic interviews and one homogenous pair. The heterogeneous pairs will consist of one Somali teacher and one non-Somali teacher. Each participant in the dyad shares the common ground of being a DLI teacher at PPS and working with immigrant students. We expect the participants to share a base level of vocabulary and knowledge about DLI. However, given the difference in program history, language of instruction, and students we expect conversation to evolve into a “sharing and comparing” dynamic.

These first two interviews will take a more structured approach in order to focus the conversation and to ensure that each dyad covers the same topics. By using dyadic interviews, the conversation becomes the primary source of data, therefore it is important to make sure the conversation flows naturally and is productive. With this in mind, the moderator will be involved

as much as is necessary. The moderator will follow the Dyadic Interview Guide (see Appendix A).

In order to address the unique needs of the Somali instructors, a follow up homogenous dyadic interview will be conducted with both Somali instructors. This interview will take place after the analysis of the first two heterogeneous interviews. This will provide an opportunity for the researchers to share the initial findings as well as for the participants to discuss their unique challenges and concerns in more detail. This interview will be less structured, allowing for a relatively open discussion. The introduction to the Moderator's Guide need not change for this third interview. The research team will prepare the questions for this interview following their analysis.

Each interview will be approximately 90 minutes and will be recorded using the iPhone application "VoiceRecorder." The moderator will take notes during the interview. Data files will be stored on password protected servers. Given the specificity of this research, anonymity will be impossible for both the Somali instructors. However, the names of the non-Somali instructors will remain anonymous. Participants will be informed of this protocol during recruitment in a consent form detailing the potential risks (see Appendix B), as well as prior to the beginning of each interview.

## **Participants**

The participants in this research project will be dual language instruction (DLI) instructors in the PPS system. There will be two Somali language instructors and two non-Somali instructors. Of the two non-Somali instructors at least one will be a Spanish DLI instructor and the second may be from any of the other languages offered at PPS: Russian, Japanese, Chinese, and Vietnamese. The Spanish language program is by far the largest DLI program in PPS, thus it is important to include the Spanish language DLI instructors for their content knowledge and experience. Interview participants must have students in their classes who are English learners. Participants will be informed of the research topic during recruitment. This will include informing them of who they will be paired with in the dyadic interview. The participants can be from any of the elementary school level.

## **Recruitment & Scheduling Logistics**

A community collaboration between PPS and the Somali community led to the development of this assessment, and as a result both Somali language instructors have agreed to participate. In order to recruit the final two participants an email will be sent to all DLI instructors from Michael Bacon, the PPS Director of Dual Language Department. This email will ask for DLI instructors to volunteer, explaining the objectives of the assessment and the requirements: that participants are a current DLI instructor at PPS with immigrant students in their DLI classes. In order to keep participants involvement anonymous, the email will direct anyone interested to email the research team directly. Please see Appendix C for a draft of the recruitment email. In addition to this email, flyers may be posted in faculty break rooms.

Our goal is to have at least one Spanish instructor be a part of the conversation with the Somali instructors. If this recruitment email is not effective in recruiting at least one Spanish instructor, then a separate email will be sent out to the Spanish instructors specifically explaining the need

for their participation. Again, those interested will be directed to contact the research team directly. Please see Appendix D for a draft of the second recruitment email.

Participants will be chosen on a first-come, first-served basis, as long as they fit the criteria of being a current PPS DLI instructor with immigration children in their class. In order to keep participants involvement anonymous, the names of participants will not be shared with anyone from PPS other than the fellow peer in the interview. Each participant will be asked to keep the name of their conversation partner confidential.

The research team will send an email to all participants with a link to a Google form listing potential times and dates. Participants will be instructed to fill in multiple time slots, they will not need a Google account to fill out the form. Please see Appendix E for a draft of this email. Two days before the interview date an interview reminder email will be sent to each participant individually with a consent form attached. Participants will be asked to arrive approximately 15 minutes prior to the intended start time of the interview to allow for possible delays. Please see Appendix F for a draft of this email.

Room reservations at the Multnomah County Library should be made exactly one week prior to each interview. See “Location” section below for further details. The night before each interview please review the day of check list in Appendix G.

### **Location**

All interviews will take place at the Multnomah County Hollywood Library (4040 NE Tillamook St.). Study rooms will be reserved one week in advance for a full two hours. Reservations are free and can be made by phone by calling: (503) 988-5123. The county library provides a neutral space with the intention of easing any concerns of anonymity for the participants.

Make sure to arrive early to find the room, set up the recorder, consent forms, and name plates. It would be best to set up and then wait for the participants at the front desk to then usher them to the room.

### **Moderator Strategy**

The moderator for the interviews will take a semi-structured approach to the dyadic interview. All six questions created should be covered, we would suggest approximately 10 minutes per question with the understanding that this may need some adjustment. The point of the interview is to hear from the participants’ perspectives and experiences which will require the moderator to avoid controlling the conversation too forcefully. The moderator should act more as an observer of the conversation, introducing their role as a facilitator of discussion rather than an interviewer. The moderator can take notes during the interview as a signal of their neutrality.

It is very important that the moderator convey a sense of interest rather than investigation for the purposes of discipline. There is a risk that the participants could view this assessment as a step towards cancelation of the program. If this is the case the participants are likely to avoid sharing their true beliefs, making this assessment lose purpose. It is important that the moderator explains clearly the purpose of the assessment is to improve the program, not to find reasons to cut it. It will be important to keep reactions to statements neutral.

The participants for this study share a common profession, thus we can expect there will be enough overlap in their experiences to spur and interest in learning from each other. The moderator should be prepared however in case one participant is overly talkative. It is important to hear from both participants, thus the use of tactful probing question directed at the quieter participant can be used. Since both participants have volunteered – the Somali teachers were involved in suggestion this assessment and the second participant is solely a volunteer - we can cautiously expect a natural conversation.

### **Interview Questions**

There are six main questions in this guide, this includes an ice breaker or introduction question as well as a wrap-up question at the end. The questions are open ended so that the participants can share their personal experiences. The questions are centered around the experience of being a DLI instructor specifically at PPS; this includes questions regarding areas of support and challenges. One question asks the instructors to discuss their views on the experience of immigrant children in their classes.

### **Analysis**

Recordings will be transcribed by the moderator and analyzed using the qualitative analysis software Atlas.ti. Analysis of the transcripts will begin by using an open-coding process. This will be followed by grouping codes into emerging categories followed by grouping categories into larger themes. Special attention will be paid to similarities and differences between experiences of DLI instructors, as well as point of agreement on ways to improve DLI curriculum.

Emerging themes from the data will likely explain the overarching differences between DLI instructors and the challenges they face. In addition to identifying these themes, we will create a more specific list of suggestions for the new DLI instructors. This list is key to supporting the instructors in improving their program.

### **Reporting**

The final product of this research will be a progress report of the new program, including the findings of the three dyadic interviews and the class performance data. This will include an assessment of whether the program is progressing towards achieving its intended goals, and a summary of ways in which the instructors can improve – including lessons learned from colleagues and suggestions for needed support.

### **Expected Outcomes**

The goal of this research is to identify ways to support the new Somali DLI instructors in their work as well as in their curriculum development. We assume that fellow DLI instructors share a common experience, thus we anticipate that a facilitated conversation between colleagues will provide useful advice. This advice will likely cover many aspects of a DLI instructor's work,

such as: how best to approach relationships between students and their families, how to support students who are struggling to adapt to formal school settings, and creative ways to build a curriculum that prepares students to eventually transition into English instruction classes. Additionally, we expect to hear about alternative methods of assessing student progress, beyond the tradition written exam.

Finally, we may learn how instructors navigate their unique roles within the PPS structure, including whether there is a need to advocate for one's role in the school in addition to doing their job. It is possible this burden is not equally felt across instructors of different languages. We could expect Spanish DLI instructors to feel a stronger sense of stability in their work relative to the Somali or Vietnamese instructors, given the size of their respective student populations.

## Appendix A

### Somali Instruction Assessment Dyadic Interview Guide

Date:	Place:
Dyadic Interview #:	Facilitator:

#### **Introduction:**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today. My name is [NAME OF MODERATOR] from [ORGANIZATION NAME]. My organization has been hired by PPS to conduct an assessment of the new Somali Dual Language Instruction program. This interview is one part of the larger assessment of the new program. The program was implemented two years ago in response to data showing that the Somali students at PPS were struggling more than their peers. After two years of the program PPS would like to check in on how the program is going. The objective of the assessment is to identify areas which may need adjustment or additional support so that the program can continue to serve the students well.

We will be collecting information for the assessment by looking at the student performance data in combination with a series of interviews with DLI instructors. Today's interview is referred to as a dyadic interview. The point of a dyadic interview is to have a discussion between two people on a focused topic. I have a set number of questions to guide our conversation today; however the goal is to have a discussion which means our conversation may take some natural turns along the way. My role as a moderator will be to make sure we do not veer too far off the topic for the day. Additionally, I will be making sure that each of you has an equal opportunity to contribute to the conversation.

#### **Conversation Protocol**

The purpose of this interview is to gather your opinion, so in order to do this we have a couple of things to keep in mind. We have a couple of guidelines to help us have a productive conversation today.

1. There are no right answers, we are interested in learning about your experiences.
2. Please respect each other's opinions.
3. One person speaks at a time, this is helpful for us in terms of gathering a clear recording of our conversation.
4. Practice active listening.
5. Try and keep focused on the topic.

#### **Consent form**

Before we start today, have you both had a chance to look over the consent form and sign it?

#### **Audio Recording Instructions**

As you see in the consent form you signed, we will be recording our session today. This recording is solely for the purposes of accuracy. Your opinions are a critical part of this assessment, we want to make sure we have them recorded accurately. The recordings will be transcribed and stripped of any unique identifiers. All files will be kept on a password protected server, only to be accessed by the research team.

### Confidentiality

Our research team will be making every effort to ensure the highest level of confidentiality. However, since there are two of you in this conversation there is some inherent loss of confidentiality. We ask that you respect each other's right to privacy and agree that what is said here will stay here. Again, all audio recordings will be transcribed, and the audio will be destroyed after transcription.

### Interview Questions

- I. Please introduce yourself, your name, how long you have been with PPS, your professional background and how long you have been a DLI instructor.
- II. How do you feel about being an DLI instructor at PPS? (*NOTE: May not need to ask this question.*)
  - a. What do you like best?
  - b. What do you like least?
- III. Do you feel supported in you work? (*PROBE: Give examples, i.e. feel supported by administration, colleagues, community, parents, etc.*)
  - a. Are there areas in which you feel especially supported?
  - b. Are there areas in which you wish you had more support?
- IV. What are some of the challenges PPS DLI instructor face?
  - a. Please describe how you envision a perfect day in class. Is it challenging to accomplish this kind of day? If so, please explain what it is that prevents your perfect day.
- V. Describe the challenges you think immigrant children face in school and at PPS in particular. (*PROBE: Ask "do you feel country of origin influences the way you teach?"*)
  - a. Limitations aside, what would you suggest be done to make their experience better?
  - b. Describe what you think success for your immigrant students look like? (*NOTE: Notice if DLI is mentioned?*)
- VI. Is there anything I have not asked you that you think I should have?
  - a. Is there anything you would like to add to the conversation that has not already been said?

(*At 90 minutes*) Thank you for coming today. That is the end of our discussion. Again, I ask that you please respect the confidentiality of this conversation today.

The next steps for our research team will be to compile this information from both our discussions into an analysis of our findings. We will then be sharing those findings with both the Somali instructors in a follow up discussion. After that third conversation our team will be writing up a report of our total findings including a review of student performance. We will include our recommendations based on our findings and submit the report to PPS. The report will be public record.



If you have any follow up questions or wish to add anything to what you have said today, please feel free to contact us by email. You can find the email address on my card which is in front of you there.

## Appendix B

*Adapted from the Center for Public Policy Consent Form*  
[INSERT RESEARCH ORGANIZATION HEADER HERE]

### **Portland Public School – Somali Instruction Assessment Dyadic Interview Consent Form**

#### **Introduction**

You are being asked to participate in a study that is led by [NAME OF PI AND ORGANIZATION].

The purpose of this research is to conduct a check-in with the two new Somali Dual Language Instruction (DLI) instructors two years into this new program in order to assess their preparedness and level of support they are receiving from the community, their colleagues and the administration. You have been asked to participate in this interview because of the position you hold within PPS as a DLI instructor. This research will consist of three dyadic interviews, including both Somali instructors as well as other DLI instructors working at Portland Public Schools.

This form will explain the research study, and will also explain the possible risks as well as possible benefits to you. Any questions can be directed to [NAME OF PI AND CONTACT INFORMATION].

#### **What is a Dyadic Interview**

A dyadic interview is a facilitate conversation between two people. A facilitator uses key questions to guide the conversation based on the research topic. Participants will be able to exchange ideas in a conversational format within the scope of the study, the time allotted, and the basic conversation protocol.

#### **Basic Conversation Protocol**

By consenting you agree to participate in this interview within the following basic conversation protocol.

1. Respect everyone and all opinions.
2. Equal opportunity to participate.
3. One person talks at a time.
4. Practice active listening.
5. Keep the discussion focused on the topic, rather than individuals.

#### **What will happen if I decide to participate?**

If you agree to participate, you will be invited to participate in a dyadic interview. The dyadic interview will include questions about your experience as a Portland Public School DLI instructor.

**How long will I be in this interview?**

The interview will take a total of approximately 90 minutes for one session. The interview will be audio recorded with consent from the participants. You can ask for the recording to stop at any time, and for any recording to be deleted.

**What are the risks or side effects of being in this study?**

There are risks of possible loss of privacy and confidentiality associated with participating in a research study. We will ask to record this session so we can transcribe it for analysis. The risk is if these files were to be accessed by someone from outside the team. The recordings, notes, and transcripts will be on password protected servers. For more information about risks and discomforts, ask the investigators.

**What are the benefits to being in this study?**

There are no anticipated direct benefits to participating in this study. Your participation however, will help inform any improvements to the Somali DLI program.

**How will my information be kept confidential?**

We will take measures to protect the security of all your personal information. We will not share your name or confirm that you have participated in the study if asked, and your name will not be included in any reports or publications. Quotes or excerpts from the interview maybe included in reports or publications, but with no details that could allow others to identify you. Notes and recordings from the interview may include your name, but these materials will not be available to anyone except the research team. Your name will not be used in any published reports related to this study. Conversation partners will also be asked to keep names confidential.

*(If seeking IRB insert any required information of theirs here).*

**Can I stop being in the study once I begin?**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose to participate or to withdraw at any point in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Whom can I call with questions or complaints about this study?**

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints at any time about the research study, contact [INSERT PI NAME AND CONTACT INFO].

**Whom can I call with questions about my rights as a research participant?**

*(If seeking IRB add their information here)*

**CONSENT**

You are making a decision whether to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided (or the information was read to you). By signing this consent form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights as a research participant.

You have had an opportunity to ask questions and all questions have been answered to your satisfaction. By signing this consent form, you agree to participate in this study. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Adult Subject (print)	Signature of Adult Subject	Date

**INVESTIGATOR SIGNATURE [TO BE SIGNED BY PSU]**

This research study has been explained to the participant and all of his/her questions have been answered. The participant understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Investigator/ Research Team Member (type or print)

_____	_____
(Signature of Investigator/ Research Team Member)	Date

## Appendix C

*Subject Line:[DLI Assessment: Invitation to peer-to-peer interviews]*

*Dear PPS Dual Language Instructors,*

*As some of you may have heard, two years ago PPS began a Somali dual language instruction class. The Somali DLI program was introduced as an intervention to address concerning data released in a PPS report in 2015 which showed that our Somali students are struggling in school more than their peers. [WE ARE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE FROM X LANGUAGES]*

*PPS has decided to partner with [RESEARCH GROUP] to conduct a program evaluation in an effort to make sure this new program is meeting its intended goals of supporting our Somali students. The assessment will consist of two parts, the first is an analysis of class performance data. The second, is a series of dyadic (paired) interviews including two DLI instructors from different languages. These interviews are an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning in addition to the greater objective of assessing to what extent instructors are equipped and supported in their work.*

*I would like to invite you to volunteer for this opportunity to participate in a peer-to-peer interview. The interviews will last approximately 90 minutes; they will take place off PPS campus and after school hours. As such, you will be compensated with time and half pay for the length of the interview (90 minutes).*

*In order to participate, you must be a current PPS DLI instructor with immigrant children in your DLI class.*

*If you are interested in participating, please email the research team directly by [TWO WEEK OUT DATE].*

*If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact myself [INSERT EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER] or [NAME OF LEAD INVESTIGATOR, NAME OF RESEARCH GROUP, CONTACT INFORMATION].*

*Thank you for your service to our students and for your collaboration.*

*Sincerely,*

*Michael Bacon  
PPS Director of Dual Language Department*

## Appendix D

*Dear Spanish DLI Instructors,*

*I am writing you today to follow up on an email sent two weeks ago inviting all DLI instructors to participate in a peer-to-peer interview with our new Somali DLI instructors. Unfortunately, we have not been successful in recruiting any Spanish DLI instructors. Given the size and success of the Spanish DLI program, we would like to specifically invite you to participate in this conversation. In case you missed the first email below are the details of this effort. I hope you will consider participating.*

*As some of you may have heard two years ago PPS began a Somali dual language instruction class. The Somali DLI program was introduced as an intervention to address concerning data released in a PPS report in 2015 which showed that our Somali students are struggling in school more than their peers.*

*PPS has decided to partner with [RESEARCH GROUP] to conduct a program evaluation in an effort to make sure this new program is meeting its intended goals of supporting our Somali students. The assessment will consist of two parts, the first is an analysis of class performance data. The second, is a series of dyadic (paired) interviews including two DLI instructors from different languages. These interviews are an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning in addition to the greater objective of assessing to what extent instructors are equipped and supported in their work.*

*I would like to invite you to volunteer for this opportunity to participate in a peer-to-peer interview. The interviews will last approximately 90 minutes, they will take place off PPS campus and after school hours. As such you will be compensated with time and half pay for the length of the interview (90 minutes).*

*In order to participate, you must be a current PPS DLI instructor with immigrant children in your DLI class.*

*If you are interested in participating, please email the research team directly by [TWO WEEK OUT DATE].*

*If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact myself [INSERT EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER] or [NAME OF LEAD INVESTIGATOR, NAME OF RESEARCH GROUP, CONTACT INFORMATION].*

*Thank you for your service to our students and for your collaboration.*

*Sincerely,*

*Michael Bacon  
PPS Director of Dual Language Department*

## Appendix E

*Subjection line: Scheduling Interview for DLI Assessment*

*Dear [NAME]*

*My name is [NAME OF RESEARCHER TEAM MEMBER], I am [TITLE AND ORGANIZATION]. This is a follow-up email from Michael Bacon's email sent on [DATE] about the Somali Dual Language Instruction Assessment. You are receiving this email because you have agreed to participate in a peer-to-peer interview.*

*As Mr. Bacon mentioned [NAME OF RESEARCH ORG] has been hired by PPS to conduct this assessment. The interviews will be conducted by the head of the research team [NAME AND TITLE] in the coming weeks.*

*Please click on the link "DLI Assessment Interview Scheduling Form" below. It will direct your browser to an interview schedule form. Please select 3 potential time slots you are available for a 90-minute interview. If possible, please respond by [ONE WEEK OUT DATE]. I will send a follow-up email directly to you confirming your interview time. All interviews will take place in [LOCATION]. Closer to the actual interview date, you will receive a detailed confirmation email listing the specific room location.*

*[DLI Assessment Interview Scheduling Form \(link\)](#)*

*If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact myself [INSERT EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER] or [NAME OF LEAD INVESTIGATOR, NAME OF RESEARCH GROUP, CONTACT INFORMATION].*

*Thank you for your collaboration,*

*[NAME AND TITLE]*

**Appendix F**

*Subjection line: Interview Reminder*

*Dear [NAME,]*

*I would like to confirm your interview for the DLI assessment the day after tomorrow. Below are the details.*

*Date: Tuesday, February 27th*

*Time: 12:15PM - 2:00PM*

*Location: Skidmore Room*

*Attached you will find a copy of the Interview Consent Form. This form will explain the research study and will explain the possible risks as well as the possible benefits to you. A printed copy of the form will be provided for you at your interview.*

*If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact myself [INSERT EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER] or [NAME OF LEAD INVESTIGATOR, NAME OF RESEARCH GROUP, CONTACT INFORMATION].*

*Kind regards,  
[NAME]*



Appendix G

**Day of check list**

<b>✓</b>	<b>To-do</b>
	Reserve room at Library one week before interview
	Send reminder email to participant day before interview with consent form attached
	Make sure phone is fully charged and there is enough room on phone storage for recording
	<b>Pack</b>
	2 copies of consent forms
	Name plates
	Pens for both name plates and consent forms
	Note pad for taking notes during interview
	Phone charger
	Any signs you may have created to help guide participants
	Tape
	Poster board/poster post-it with protocol
	Business cards
	*

*\*Add more as more details come to you*