

**Comments from Education Research Stakeholders to the
National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine
Committee on The Future of Education Research at the Institute of Education Sciences**

September 21, 2021

On behalf of the 20 undersigned organizations, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on The Future of Education Research at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) study by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine. The organizations joining these comments represent scientific associations, K-12 and higher education organizations, universities, and organizations serving persons with disabilities.

We greatly appreciate the thoughtful work and deliberation that the committee has taken on over the past few months to examine the roles of the National Center for Education Research (NCER) and the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) in supporting rigorous and relevant education research. **As part of that effort, we encourage the committee to include recommendations that address the underinvestment in IES research and training programs over the past decade in its final consensus report.**

To enable NCER and NCSER to increase their respective capacities to support high-quality, innovative research and to build a diverse and inclusive education researcher workforce, we particularly encourage the committee to include two recommendations to Congress in its consensus report:

- Advance strong, sustained funding levels for the Research, Development, and Dissemination (RD&D) and the Research in Special Education line items in appropriations legislation.
- Include robust authorization levels for IES in a future reauthorization of the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA).

We are thankful for the \$100 million provided through the American Rescue Plan to support education research and data collection as part of the response in education to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are also pleased to see strong proposals with significant and long-needed boosts for the investment in IES in President Biden's FY 2022 budget request and the House FY 2022 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies bill. These proposals show the commitment of the administration and Congress to the important role education research has in informing evidence-based policy and practice.

We urge you to address funding levels in your recommendations as sufficient resources are necessary for IES to meet its mandated responsibilities under ESRA and to support emerging priorities. The FY 2022 budget request and House bill serve as important steps to restore lost purchasing power that has constrained the ability of IES to award research grants and support training programs to advance essential knowledge on important educational issues and build the education research pipeline. Unfortunately, IES is still significantly behind the deep cuts borne by sequestration in FY 2011-2013, with the FY 2021 appropriation providing nearly \$160 million less in purchasing power compared to the FY 2010 appropriation after adjusting for inflation.

The RD&D line item supports the research and training grants provided by NCER, yet funding for RD&D has remained relatively flat over the past five years. Funding in FY 2021 for RD&D was only \$3 million above the FY 2016 level of \$195 million. In that time, NCER launched new grant solicitations encouraging the use of innovative methods and open science best practices. As important as these programs are, appropriations levels have not kept up with the increased costs to incorporate the Standards for

Excellence in Education Research, resulting in larger, but fewer, grants for the field. NCER is also balancing awards for its core field-initiated education research grants with off-cycle competitions that promote replication of IES-funded research and use of state longitudinal data systems, among other programs. Postdoctoral and predoctoral training grants also provide professional development incorporating innovative methodological skills; additional funding could go toward increasing the reach of training programs to underrepresented institutions among IES grantees, including HBCUs, HSIs, and MSIs.

Funding has also remained relatively frozen for NCSER. The FY 2021 appropriated amount of \$58.5 million is only \$4.5 million above the FY 2014 funding level. Although NCSER will award research grants focused on accelerating learning recovery in special education with funding provided through the American Rescue Plan in FY 2022, it will not run its core special education research grant competition. This will be the second time since FY 2014 that NCSER has not been able to award new grants through its core research grant program due to limited funding.

Several of the organizations joining this statement will also be commenting separately on specific areas where there are gaps in research that could be supported by IES, new methods and approaches in education research, and new and different types of research and training. We have joined on these comments to collectively underscore that IES will require significant and sustained investment in order to meet those recognized needs. We thus urge the committee to include recommendations for Congress to increase appropriations and authorization levels to enable NCER and NCSER to support rigorous, timely, and innovative education research and training programs to develop a diverse education research workforce. In addition, we encourage the committee to provide language in the consensus report on the role of the executive branch to advance robust budget proposals for NCER and NCSER.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment and for considering these recommendations. If committee members have any questions or need additional information, please contact Felice Levine (flevine@aera.net) or Christy Talbot (ctalbot@aera.net) at the American Educational Research Association.

Undersigned Organizations

Alliance for Learning Innovation (ALI)
American Educational Research Association
American Psychological Association
Association of Population Centers
Consortium of Social Science Associations
EDGE Consulting Partners
ETS
Institute for Educational Leadership
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
Knowledge Alliance

LEARN Coalition
Lehigh University
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Down Syndrome Society
National Education Association
Population Association of America
Society for Research in Child Development
University of Florida
University of Washington College of Education
Vanderbilt University