

June 18, 2025

The Honorable Linda McMahon
U.S. Secretary of Education
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon,

We are writing on behalf of the Learning and Education Academic Research Network (LEARN) Coalition to express our appreciation for the focus in the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) priorities on evidence-based policy while stressing the importance of a robustly funded and fully functional Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to enable the creation and utilization of such policy. We were also encouraged by the language in the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget request around a re-imagined IES to develop and disseminate findings that are useful to practitioners and stand ready to engage with you and your advisors on this matter.

LEARN, a coalition of 41 leading research colleges across the country, advocates for the importance of research on learning and development. As experts in the field, LEARN members provide evidence-based information to guide legislators and policy makers while advocating for an increased Federal investment in education research.

We share the Department's perspective that evidence-based literacy instruction is critical to "ensuring that every student in America becomes proficient in reading." Evidence-based policies in general ensure students receive instruction backed by research, leading to improved academic achievement and outcomes helping young Americans compete globally and contribute to a thriving economy.

In order to support "evidence-based accountability, data-driven decision making, and education research for use in the classroom," it is essential that ED have a robust, funded, and fully functional IES. IES is not so at the moment. Recent administrative decisions—including staffing cuts, contract cancellations, and other operational challenges—have significantly hindered the ability of IES, and its National Center for Education Research (NCER) and National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) to ensure that taxpayer dollars effectively support education through high quality research. These disruptions will continue to stall vital research, ultimately weakening the nation's education system and negatively impacting parents, teachers, and, most importantly, students. Specifically, the inability of IES to move forward with grant review panels is stifling well-developed and award worthy applications from expanding our knowledgebase of evidence-based policy.

Likewise, having long advocated for critical reforms to the statute that authorizes IES and its functions, we will seek to provide our input as the Department thinks through what changes in IES functions and operations may be beneficial to our shared goal of creation, dissemination and use of evidence-based policy.

While the Department's thinking on IES matures, we urge the agency to move forward with the key work of IES through its existing authorities. To ensure that IES can meet its statutory mandate and our shared goal of the creation, dissemination, and use of evidence-based policy, we urge you to:

Auburn University College of Education

*Boston University
Wheelock College of Education & Human
Development*

*Boston College
Lynch School of Education and Human
Development*

*Florida State University
Anne Spencer Daves College of Education, Health,
and Human Sciences*

*Georgia State University College of Education &
Human Development*

Indiana University School of Education

*Iowa State University College of Health and
Human Sciences*

Johns Hopkins University School of Education

Lehigh University College of Education

*North Carolina State University College of
Education*

Penn State University College of Education

Purdue University College of Education

Syracuse University School of Education

Teachers College, Columbia University

*Texas A&M University College of Education &
Human Development*

*The Ohio State University College of Education
and Human Ecology*

The University of Arizona School of Education

*University of California – Berkeley
Berkeley School of Education*

*University of California – Santa Barbara
The Gevirtz Graduate School of Education*

*University of Central Florida College of
Community Innovation and Education*

*University of Connecticut
Neag School of Education*

University of Florida College of Education

*University of Georgia
Mary Frances Early College of Education*

University of Houston College of Education

*University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign College
of Education*

*University of Kansas School of Education and
Human Sciences*

*University of Maryland College Park College of
Education*

*University of Minnesota College of Education and
Human Development*

*University of Missouri College of Education &
Human Development*

*University of Nevada-Reno College of Education &
Human Development*

*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School
of Education*

*University of Oklahoma
Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education*

University of Oregon College of Education

*University of Pennsylvania
Graduate School of Education*

University of Pittsburgh School of Education

*University of Southern California
Rossier School of Education*

*The University of Texas at Austin College of
Education*

*University of Vermont
College of Education and Social Services*

*University of Wisconsin – Madison School of
Education*

University of Wyoming College of Education

*Vanderbilt University
Peabody College of Education and Human
Development*

*Virginia Commonwealth University School of
Education*

1. **Restart the review of grant applications and peer review panels** – Without this critical function in place, existing grant applications submitted in September cannot be processed and our nation’s children and teachers will miss out on additional evidence-based policy that can improve student achievement;
2. **Adequately staff IES** – The reduction-in-force earlier this year that impacted IES cut too deeply in our view and the Institute’s core functions remain compromised; and
3. **Allocate no less than \$900 million in funding for IES, including \$291.8 million for the Research, Development, and Dissemination (RD&D) line item and \$71.6 million for the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSEER), in FY 2026 appropriations** – After reviewing the Administration's FY 2026 budget proposal for IES, we are concerned with the inadequate level of funding proposed for IES activities that are not related to the National Assessment of Educational Progress – the \$124 million proposed will not allow for core functions of IES, including making continuation awards and funding new grants through RD&D and NCSEER.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on the critical importance of research funding to support evidence-based instruction and learning.

Sincerely,

Camilla P. Benbow, Ed.D.

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Patricia and Rodes Hart Dean of Education and Human Development of the Peabody College of Education and Human Development, Vanderbilt University

Rick Ginsberg, Ph.D.

Co-Chair, Learning and Education Academic Research Network (LEARN)

Dean of the School of Education, University of Kansas

Glenn E. Good, Ph.D.

Co-Chair, Learning and Education Academic Research Network (LEARN)

Dean of the College of Education, University of Florida