

**Written Testimony of the Learning and Education Academic Research Network (LEARN) Regarding FY2025 Education Research Programs before the House Subcommittee on Labor, Health, & Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) with respect to funding for the Institute for Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education and the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
May 03, 2024**

On behalf of the LEARN Coalition, we urge support for increased funding for several key education research programs that the LHHS subcommittee will debate as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 appropriations process. LEARN, a coalition of 41 leading research colleges of education across the country, supports critical investments in research aimed at advancing the scientific understanding of learning and development. We advocate for greater funding for these priorities across all Federal agencies, including the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Specifically, with respect to IES LEARN is requesting no less than \$900 million for IES overall with \$291.8 million dedicated to the Research, Development and Dissemination (RD&D) line item and \$71.6 million for the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSE). Within the National Institutes of Health (NIH), LEARN recommends \$1.89 billion for NICHD and \$2.351 billion for NIMH.

Institute of Education Sciences

As the primary Federal agency charged with supporting research for education practice and policy, IES is essential to developing a comprehensive and dependable evidence base. Over the past few years, only a fraction of applications has successfully been awarded grants from NCER and NCSE, roughly 12-15 percent. However, the ability of IES to respond to the demand for education research funding and meet the need to expand our education knowledge base is currently severely hampered by insufficient funding. Unfortunately, even when provided with \$100 million in supplemental funding under the American Rescue Plan, Congress required IES in 2022 to return around \$44 million intended for research on how to aid students in recovering from pandemic-related learning setbacks. The lack of resources to meet both demand and need means vital research cannot proceed, impacting the improvement and fortification of the nation's education system. This situation results in losses for principals, teachers, and most importantly, students.

Education research provides the bedrock of knowledge used by educators to help preK-12 students and those seeking a postsecondary education succeed. Increases provided to IES in FY 2025 are critical to support the continued examination of what works and what does not work to further our education system's curricula, instructional techniques and assessments. The extra funding will enhance IES' efforts in education research overall, while also delivering scientifically validated solutions to educators nationwide. Given the importance of developing reliable evidence during this critical time, LEARN is

recommending \$900 million for IES overall and \$291.8 million for the RD&D line item within IES.

The LEARN Coalition strongly advocates for IES program funding as it enables institutions to conduct vital education research nationwide. For instance, the [University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign](#) spearheaded a project targeting children at risk for math learning difficulties, developing three computer-aided programs tailored for young learners and evaluating their effectiveness. Despite facing formidable obstacles in their academic journey due to emotional or behavioral disorders, students often experience subpar performance, elevated dropout rates, and heightened risk of incarceration; however, the [Supported College and Career Readiness \(SCCR\) program](#), jointly developed by Lehigh University and the University of Connecticut faculty, aim to mitigate these challenges by providing tailored support and interventions to enhance school engagement and bolster post-secondary outcomes. Concurrently, the NC State College of Education secured funding to devise a novel intervention for upper elementary English language learners struggling with reading comprehension, within the [Supporting Reading Comprehension for English Learners Through Inquiry-Based, Language Focused Instruction](#) project. These initiatives align with the LEARN coalition's mission to leverage IES-supported research in addressing diverse educational challenges, spanning from math proficiency to language mastery, thereby bolstering assistance for students across varying learning needs and developmental stages.

Equally important to funding for RD&D is an increase for research on special education to \$71.6 million. IES funds special education research through NCSEER which is the only Federal agency specifically designated to develop and provide evaluations for programs for students with disabilities. Like the rest of IES's education research grant making, NCSEER capacity to finance new awards is largely restricted due to funding cuts in 2010 from which the Center has still not fully recovered. Research funded by NCSEER provides special educators and administrators evidence-based resources that improve academic outcomes for children with or at risk of disabilities. Additional funding for NCSEER is necessary to support data and evidence-based resources that will ensure a strong recovery for these students.

While LEARN is a consistent advocate for funding for IES, other prominent experts have also expressed concern over the relatively small amount of funding being provided to IES compared to other Federal research agencies. In a 2022 National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NAEM) report titled "[The Future of Education Research at IES](#)," a diverse panel of 17 experts in the field stated that Congress should re-examine the IES budget as it is currently severely underfunded despite the continuously expanding work of IES. After hours of research and discussion, the panel recognized that IES funding "does not appear to be on par with that of other scientific funding agencies," such as NIH or the National Science Foundation (NSF). LEARN urges the Subcommittee to hear the call of this trusted body while investing in both IES overall and RD&D and NCSEER specifically.

Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the National Institute of Mental Health

There is also critical education research support that comes from NIH that are in need of additional resources if we are to expand evidence-based knowledge in education. Specifically, we believe two NIH Institutes – NICHD and NIMH – require increases in Federal funding in FY 2025. Both Institutes provide critical funding to investigate the science behind learning and development, particularly for vulnerable student groups.

For NICHD, LEARN recommends an increase in funding to \$1.89 billion. This funding level will ensure that researchers can build on the knowledge already gained, evaluate what works best in treating developmental disorders and develop new research-based strategies to improve students' learning and development. By investing in NICHD at this level, we not only prioritize the well-being of our youth but also foster a future where every individual has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

LEARN also recommends an increase in funding for NIMH to \$2.35 billion. This funding level will help increase understanding of the behavioral, biological and environmental mechanisms necessary for developing interventions to reduce the burden of mental and behavioral disorders and optimize learning and development. Moreover, bolstering funding for NIMH will enable researchers to explore innovative avenues for optimizing learning and developmental processes, thereby fostering healthier and more resilient individuals and communities.

The LEARN Coalition believes that collectively these key investments in education research will drive improvements in schools, teacher and student performance in the coming years, strengthen the nation's education infrastructure and ensure a strong, educated workforce in the long run. Thank you for considering these requests.

Camilla P. Benbow, Ed.D.

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

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

Glenn E. Good, Ph.D.

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

Dean of the College of Education, University of Florida

Members of the LEARN Coalition: Auburn University, College of Education; Boston University, Wheelock College of Education and Human Development; Boston College, Lynch School of Education; Florida State University, 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 Human Sciences; Johns Hopkins University, School of Education; Lehigh University,

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