

**Written Testimony of the Learning and Education Academic Research Network (LEARN)
Regarding FY2022 Education Research Programs before the Senate Subcommittee on
Labor, Health, & Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies**

June 22, 2021

The Learning and Education Academic Research Network (LEARN), a coalition of 38 of the nation's leading research colleges of education across the country, advocates for the importance of research on learning and development. Education research provides the bedrock of knowledge used by our principals, teachers, counselors and professors to help preK-12 students and those seeking a postsecondary education succeed. With the staggering learning loss being experienced by students due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that Congress provides education research with the resources to guarantee that educational interventions are innovative, evidence-based and effective. LEARN urges the Subcommittee to meet the President's fiscal year (FY) 2022 budget request of 737.5 million for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) overall with \$267.9 million dedicated to Research, Development and Dissemination (RD&D). LEARN also requests that the Subcommittee provide \$70 million for the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSE). In addition to requesting that the Subcommittee meet the President's FY2022 budget request of \$1.94 billion for National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), LEARN requests that the Subcommittee provide \$2.21 billion for National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in FY2022.

While advocating for these increased resources for FY2022, we want to express our appreciation for the increases for IES that were made in FY2021. We would also like to thank Congress for the inclusion of \$100 million for IES in the American Rescue Plan Act; this investment marks Congress' awareness of the importance of education research in addressing the nation's most difficult educational challenges. An increased investment in IES for FY2022 would allow for a more robust development, and dissemination of valuable education research to innovatively address the vast array of educational challenges posed before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Institute of Education Sciences

The work of IES and its grantees can guide the nation's learning recovery so that we can exit the pandemic with a stronger, more equitable, educational system than we entered with. As the primary Federal agency charged with supporting research for education practice and policy, IES is essential to developing a comprehensive, reliable evidence base, and ensuring that teaching and learning practices are grounded in scientifically valid research. Unfortunately, IES is only able to fund one out of every 10 applications it receives due to the limitations in its budget, despite a far greater percentage of such applications being rated excellent and worth of funding.

Without a critical examination of what works and what does not work to further knowledge, our education systems would be left to the same curriculum, instructional techniques

and assessments, regardless of whether they spur student success. Examples of critical education research funded by IES include the development and adoption of a statewide approach to math instruction in one State that is now utilized in other States; the development and implementations of a reading curriculum now being adopted as a statewide literacy approach by a State legislature and improved instructional and behavioral practices for children with disabilities. Without continued support for general education research infrastructure, notable programs like these would not exist to address some of the nation's longest standing educational challenges and support the nation's most at-risk students.

The physical closure of schools and transition to virtual learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly disrupted education research at a time when it is more critical than ever before. Although IES grantees have adjusted their research where possible to remote and hybrid instruction, this pivot has also resulted in unanticipated costs, delays and cancellations; these increased costs are likely to persist through 2022. Nevertheless, IES funded work has provided insightful research findings and valuable tools for educators and caregivers throughout the pandemic. This includes a longitudinal study on the impact of COVID-19 on the educational attainment of economically disadvantaged undergraduates and an interactive tool guide on teaching math to young children at home. The work of IES and its grantees have already begun guiding the nation towards a strong and successful educational recovery.

The focus IES drives on education research is especially important today as our schools must ensure that efforts to reduce learning loss because of the COVID-19 pandemic are rooted in research and evidence-based practice. Given the importance of developing reliable evidence, LEARN is requesting that the Subcommittee meet President Biden's FY2022 request for \$737.5 million for IES overall and \$267.9 million for the Research, Development, and Dissemination (RD&D) line item within IES. These resources for the RD&D line item will build upon the critical resources provided in the American Rescue Plan Act for IES to further combat the negative learning outcomes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The President's request for a 15 percent increase towards IES and a 35 percent increase for the RD&D line item is further evidence of the importance of supporting education research and evidence-based practices in response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, we recommend that funding for research in special education, through the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER), should be increased to \$70 million. NCSER is the only Federal agency specifically designated to develop and provide evaluations for programs for students with disabilities, but currently has a budget that has remained relatively flat since FY2014. Research funded by NCSER provides special educators and administrators research-based resources that improve educational academic outcomes for children with or at risk of disabilities. During a time when special education students have been dramatically impacted by the change in schooling due to COVID-19, additional funding to NCSER is necessary to support data and evidence-based resources to guide the continued COVID-19 response and recovery for these students. Funding of \$70 million would allow for a new competition in FY2022, allowing further resources to address COVID-19 learning issues.

National Institutes of Health

There are critical education research programs within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that also need additional support. NICHD is essential to education research as it examines brain functions and the impact of different educational services on learning and development. LEARN supports an increase in NICHD funding to \$1.94 billion. This increase 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 student's learning and development. Additionally, it will support NICHD's efforts to understand the effects of COVID-19 on key at-risk populations, including the cognitive development of children and adolescents.

LEARN also supports an increase in funding for NIMH to \$2.21 billion. This increase will help further 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. The untraditional school year and strains of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a largely negative impact on the mental health of children and adolescents nationwide, it is important that research in this field is supported to address these challenges.

LEARN believes it is critical that evidence-based research is implemented and applied to schools nationwide as they work to address the myriad of educational challenges that existed prior, and were exacerbated, by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the nation looks towards recovery, IES and NIH must be at the forefront of any effort to ensure that Federal resources are going towards effective programming and interventions. The LEARN Coalition strongly believes that key investments in education research through IES and NIH will drive improvements in teacher and student performance in the coming years and allow for the beginning of a successful recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for your commitment to sustaining and strengthening the nation's education research infrastructure.

Respectfully submitted,

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