

**Written Testimony of Felice J. Levine, PhD, Executive Director
American Educational Research Association
U.S. House, Committee of Appropriations, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriations for the
Institute of Education Sciences, Department of Education, April 29, 2015**

Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the American Educational Research Association. Appreciative of these stringent times, we recommend that the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) receive \$703.6 million in Fiscal Year 2016. This recommendation is consistent with that of the Friends of IES coalition, in which we are a leading member.

AERA is the major national scientific association of 25,000 faculty, researchers, graduate students, and other distinguished professionals dedicated to advancing knowledge about education, encouraging scholarly inquiry related to education, and promoting the use of research to improve education and serve the public good.

U.S. leaders and citizens broadly agree that education is a pathway to success, not just for individuals but also for our country's economy. For example, we have learned that, when looking at the bottom income quartiles, bachelor degree graduates are more upwardly mobile,ⁱ indicating that obtaining a bachelor's degree rather than only a high school diploma leads to higher lifetime earnings and lower rates of future participation in social programs.^{ii,iii}

We also know that our citizens support investing in education. The Pew Research Center found that 60 percent of survey respondents would increase spending on education, a higher percentage than for any other category. In order, however, to allocate resources to programs and policies that work, we need reliable research to best guide decisions.

The public and policy makers value high-quality education, and our citizens are willing to spend more to improve quality; nonetheless, education research was less than 2 percent of the

\$67 billion spent on research in 2013 by institutions of higher education (largely derived from federal grants and contracts). By contrast, 56 percent of the R&D funding went to life sciences. In 2015, the budget for IES was just over 1 percent of the Department of Education budget, illustrating the underinvestment in research on education as compared with other fields.

Since IES was created in 2002, it has made dramatic contributions to the progress of education. Yet we in the U.S. have a far way to go to provide high-quality education to all of our students. In addition to old questions that remain unanswered—such as how to best prepare teachers—we have barely begun to understand the opportunities provided by advances in technology. IES needs increased funding to continue our progress, using rigorous research to inform education policy. IES comprises the four national centers listed below. Each serves a critical role in improving the quality of education in the U.S.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

NCES is one of the 13 primary federal statistical agencies in the United States. It collects, analyzes, and reports on education data and statistics on the condition of education in our country; conducts long-term longitudinal studies and surveys; and supports international assessments in a manner that meets the highest methodological standards and practices for data confidentiality and data security.

Federal, state, and local policy makers rely on over two dozen NCES-supported survey programs, assessments, and administrative data sets, as do schools, educators, and researchers across the country. NCES's annual report, *The Condition of Education*, provides a comprehensive statistical overview of U.S. early childhood, K–12, and postsecondary education.

NCES also provides technical assistance to public and private education agencies and to states improving their statistical systems. Grants from the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems

(SLDS) program encourage states to build capacity to link data between early childhood, K–12, and postsecondary systems. The President has requested doubling the amount for this program from \$35 million in FY 2015 to \$70 million in FY 2016. This would enable states and districts to conduct research and program evaluation in order to generate timely and meaningful information for improving accountability, assessment, and school support systems. One need only look at research that analyzed state administrative data in North Carolina and Washington State on early childhood programs, teacher hiring, and other timely issues to understand the value of investing in such data systems.

NCES is home to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as the “Nation’s Report Card.” NAEP is an important resource for identifying long-term trends in educational proficiency in each state and—through the Trial Urban District Assessment—in the largest school districts in the nation.

Also of significance is that NCES manages the U.S. participation in international assessments and surveys, which prominently include the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Without continued adequate funding for these international assessments, it will become more difficult to accurately gauge U.S. performance in reading, math, and science in comparison to other countries. This information is particularly useful in a time of increasing global economic competition.

At the current funding level, NCES is unable to adequately fund the most timely information on several high-priority education policy issues: early childhood education, school crime and safety, and postsecondary educational costs and student progress.

National Center for Education Research (NCER)

Over the past decade, NCER-funded research has made significant advances in our understanding on a broad range of questions, from how best to support student learning to how to maximize school completion and adult education. One area where NCER-funded research has challenged our preconceived assumptions about education is that of teacher preparation. In the past, teacher quality was largely measured by licensure. However, additional data and rigorous research have looked at student progress, telling us much more about teacher effectiveness. Some of the results have been surprising—obtaining a master’s degree has not, for example, been linked to greater student achievement (except in one study in middle school math).

Despite the tremendous promise of NCER-funded research, in FY 2014, a quarter of proposals receiving scores of Outstanding or Excellent went unfunded. Adequate funding for NCER will allow R&D centers and research grantees to continue to produce rigorous research.

National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER)

NCSER supports research that investigates how to improve developmental and education outcomes for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with, or at risk of developing, disabilities. Since its creation in 2004 under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, NCSER has made important contributions to research goals such as understanding factors related to children’s academic growth, developing measurement systems, documenting skill development, and developing learning and testing interventions to improve educational outcomes.

The Centers for Disease Control estimated that 1 in 68 children are identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder, a dramatic increase from the 1 in 150 children with ASD in 2002, with a corresponding increased cost of providing educational services. NCSER leads the charge to support school-based interventions for this growing population.

Despite these important research advances that could improve the quality of life for children and families and result in enormous cost savings, NCSER was unable to fund any new research grants in FY 2014 and anticipates being unable to fund all projects receiving Excellent and Outstanding ratings in FY 2015.

National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE)

NCEE conducts evaluations of large-scale educational projects and federal education programs and advances the use of IES knowledge by informing the public and reaching out to practitioners with a variety of dissemination strategies and technical assistance programs. The Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a well-used resource throughout the Department of Education, receiving 300,000 daily visitors. In addition, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) provides valuable information on the findings and methodologies of evaluations of various education practices and policies. Recent WWC reviews of research include studies of the Talent Transfer Initiative, college counseling during the summer after high school graduation, and the Diagnostic Assessment Tools program.

Adequate funding for IES has the potential to help with some of the other concerns of this committee. Improving the educational outcomes of our citizens would not only help to solve or prevent future labor and workforce problems but also improve the health of our citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of \$703.6 million for the Institute of Education Sciences in Fiscal Year 2016. AERA welcomes working with you and your subcommittee on strengthening investments in essential research, data, and statistics related to education and learning.

ⁱ The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2012). *Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations*. Washington, DC: Author.

ⁱⁱ Carnevale, A. P., Rose, J., & Cheah, B. (2011). *The College Payoff*. Washington, DC: Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce.

ⁱⁱⁱ Baum, S., Ma, J., & Payea, K. (2013). *Education Pays 2013: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society*. Washington, DC: The College Board.