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Testimony of the Knowledge Alliance before the House Subcommittee on Labor, Health, & Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies regarding the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education

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On behalf of the [Knowledge Alliance](#) (KA) we urge you to include robust funding for education research, development and dissemination (RD&D) in the U.S. Department of Education (ED) in the fiscal year (FY) 2026 appropriations bill. Specifically, we request at least \$900 million for the Institute of Education Sciences including at least level funding for IES RD&D, and at least level-funding for the Regional Educational Laboratories, Comprehensive Centers, and the Education Innovation and Research grant program. KA is a non-profit, non-partisan organization composed of the leading education groups dedicated to empowering schools, districts and all 50 States with the tools and resources needed to improve learning and outcomes for every student. For districts across the country and for different types of learners and students, KA members partner with States and districts to strengthen their education goals and address their pressing academic issues like literacy and math performance and overall school improvement. KA members' work provides information needed for parents and families to help their students succeed.

Why is education RD&D critical for a high-quality education and an important federal investment? There are a few key reasons.

First, education RD&D, which is funded primarily out of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), **produces information for parents and caregivers that empowers them to make informed decisions** about their children's education. This information tells parents how their local schools are performing and how well their school district is performing through the [National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\)](#), also known as the "Nation's report card." Second, education RD&D **produces and shares the latest on what is working for students and educators** so that every parent, teacher, and community has equal access to the same high-quality research and evidence on what works. Educators can access through IES practice guides to improve student outcomes, reviews of high-quality studies on a range of topics, and more. Finally, education RD&D **helps policymakers understand whether federal programs are working** through rigorous evaluations of federal programs to determine whether, and how well, they are working on behalf of students. IES has conducted several studies and evaluations, many of which are congressionally mandated, and include an impact study of strategies to accelerate math learning in elementary schools, a study on strategies to increase high school students' access to and success in dual enrollment courses, and many more. For these reasons, it is critical that Congress provides robust funding for IES to maintain and strengthen this important work that helps students, parents, educators, and policymakers.

States, districts, and schools want and need continued support to identify, implement, and scale evidence-based practices that improve student outcomes. KA urges Congress to maintain a strong investment in four federal programs that help them do this effectively and are important components of a strong federal RD&D investment: the Regional Educational Laboratories, Comprehensive Centers, IES RD&D, and the Education Innovation and Research Grants.

Improving student outcomes at the state and local level requires both access to high-quality research and the capacity to implement evidence-based strategies effectively. The U.S. Department of Education's **Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs)** and **Comprehensive Centers (CCs)** serve distinct but complementary roles in supporting this work.

RELs are research partners that work directly with State and Local Education Agencies to conduct rigorous, actionable research and evaluation aligned to the priorities identified by the field. They are the only federally funded entities dedicated to providing research, evaluation, and research-related technical assistance determined by State and district needs. For more than fifty years, RELs have helped States and districts generate evidence and knowledge to improve outcomes in areas such as teacher retention, literacy, math achievement, and career readiness.

CCs, on the other hand, focus on **capacity-building and implementation support**. While RELs help determine what works, CCs help ensure that those strategies can be effectively put into practice and sustained over time. CCs provide high-quality technical assistance, facilitate strategic planning, and offer practical support to help States and districts close achievement gaps and improve instruction. Each CC's scope of work is driven by the priorities of the States it serves and informed by a diverse advisory board of educators, policymakers, researchers, and community leaders.

Together, RELs and CCs help ensure that education agencies have both the knowledge and the tools they need to improve student outcomes—grounded in evidence, responsive to local needs, and focused on lasting impact.

IES RD&D funds independent evaluations of programs, including Federal education programs, to understand what works and what does not. IES RD&D also funds the What Works Clearinghouse, which houses valuable information on what works in education, from practice guides to improve student outcomes to reviews of high-quality studies on a range of topics. This kind of open-source information is critical to ensuring that every State, district, and community across the country can access high-quality research and evidence to help every student succeed. Finally, IES RD&D funds research of importance to educators that has led to improvements in curriculum and instruction and that are studying forward-looking trends like the use of generative AI to improve student outcomes.

Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grants provide funding to create, develop, implement, replicate, or take to scale entrepreneurial, evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to improve student outcomes. The EIR program consists of three different types of grants (early, mid-phase and expansion grants) that allocate increased investments as the level of evidence increases—an efficient and smart investment of Federal funds.

Maintaining and strengthening education RD&D through these programs ensures that other Federal investments-whether in foundational research or formula funding-directly improve learning and outcomes for students. While investments in this system represent only a small fraction of the overall Federal education budget, the return on these investments is what maximizes the impact of every other dollar spent, making them indispensable.

KA requests that you include robust funding for education RD&D in your FY 2026 appropriations bill, including:

- At least \$900 million for IES
- At least level funding for Regional Educational Laboratories, Comprehensive Centers, IES RD&D, and the Education Innovation and Research grant; and
- To list all these programs and funding levels in the FY 26 bill to ensure they are funded as intended by Congress

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. Please feel free to reach out to Rachel Dinkes, PhD, President and CEO of KA at rdinkes@knowledgeall.net to connect and for further information about any of these recommendations.