

IGER *Intersocietal Group for Education Research*

Honorable Arlen Specter, Chair
Honorable Tom Harkin, Ranking Member
And Members of the Senate Subcommittee on Labor,
Health, Human Services, and Education Appropriations

July 8, 2005

Dear Senator:

The Intersocietal Group for Education Research (IGER) is a coalition representing researchers and educators that advocates for high quality research to address pervasive education problems. IGER urges the Senate increase the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) funding by 10 percent and include the following funding levels above the House appropriations for critical education priorities in the FY 2006 appropriations.

- The **Education Research, Development and Dissemination** program must be funded at \$180 million.
- Appropriation language should be provided that requires funding of the **National Education Research Centers** to be competed by IES at a minimum of \$4 million each.
- Increase funding for the **Regional Education Labs** to \$70 million.
- Support funding the new **National Center for Special Education Research** at \$91 million.
- The **National Center for Education Statistics** requires an additional \$13 million for three important projects.

Successful education reform, a high priority for the administration and Congress, requires state and local education agencies to use scientifically based research to guide their decisions about which education interventions to adopt. The federal investment in R&D in education is the lowest of any cabinet level agency in federal government, amounting to only .01% of total spending in K-12 education nationwide. Education requires the level of investment afforded other federal research programs to ensure education reform is successful.

National Research Centers

The long-established national education research centers, representing the core of federal research activities in education, require your support in the FY 2006 appropriation to sustain their vitality. Language and resources must be provided to assure the centers funded through this program are truly national in scope and have the capacity to work with school systems and policy makers to develop and assist implementation.

The centers are authorized to address general areas of national need through a comprehensive research program. Their strength is the expectation and capacity to identify and address developing issues within each center's research mission. Providing flexibility and linkage to practitioners and policy makers ensures that the federal education research program will produce high quality work relevant to the education community. By establishing a minimum funding level of \$4 million for each newly competed center, Congress will assure that resources are available to continue this successful program, and to initiate new work that meets Congressional expectations of rigorous, scientifically-based research.

Regional Educational Laboratories

The regional labs are the nation's key institutions for applied education research and development. The labs work on a regional level to best address the needs and challenges of their geographic area. The priorities for each lab are determined by a local board made up of educators, parents and business representatives. There is tremendous need for scientifically based answers to our nation's education problems and the labs are essential in getting scientific evidence into the classroom.

National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER)

The funding recommendation for the new NCSER is \$91 million. Unfortunately the House bill has cut funding for this account by \$11 million. This new research capacity at IES is critical to begin to answer the many complex questions related to effective education for special education students using research based interventions

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

NCES is the principal federal agency for collecting and analyzing national and international education data. NCES faces a number of challenges in meeting its mission to provide the most current data driving education reform, yet for FY 06 was level-funded at its FY 05 appropriations of \$90.9 million by both the Administration and the House. Three opportunities for strategic additional funding would provide important data in addressing critical national education information needs:

- 1.) Extend the seven year Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECSL) through high school for an FY 06 cost of \$7 million. ECSL has a framework in place for additional data gathering, having followed a national sample of 21,000 children from kindergarten through the fifth grade monitoring health, care, and school experiences.
- 2.) Develop a data base to increase new strategies to improve math achievement by partnering with the National Science Foundation to conduct an international study examining how teachers learn to teach math. This important study would require an additional \$5 million.
- 3.) Update the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to reflect changes in college enrollment, especially the growth in non-traditional students. A study conducted by the National Research Council could provide critical guidance to NCES on improving the IPEDS at a cost of an additional \$1 million.

The Comprehensive Assistance Centers were authorized in Title II of the Education Sciences Reform Act and are administered in another part of the Department of Education.

Comprehensive Assistance Centers

The new Comprehensive Assistance Centers are scheduled to begin operation this fall. These centers require the full funding in the President's request. They will provide valuable technical assistance to districts, schools, tribes and states in implementing No Child Left Behind and will complement the R&D work of IES. Sixteen of the new centers will be regionally based, and five of them will be topical—assessment and accountability; instruction; teacher quality; innovation and improvement; and high schools.

We appreciate your consideration of our request. We look forward to working with you to support and improve the federal education research enterprise.

Sincerely,

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Educational Research Association
Association of American Geographers
American Psychological Association
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Education Knowledge Industry Association
Society for Research in Child Development