

# EDUCATION RESEARCH: EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
AND THE WORKFORCE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, SEPTEMBER 10, 2013

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**EDUCATION RESEARCH: EXPLORING  
OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN THE  
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES**

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**Tuesday, September 10, 2013  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
Washington, DC**

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The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:01 a.m., in room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. John Kline [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Kline, Petri, Foxx, Walberg, Salmon, Rokita, Miller, Scott, Hinojosa, Tierney, Holt, Grijalva, Polis, and Bonamici.

Staff present: Katherine Bathgate, Deputy Press Secretary; James Bergeron, Director of Education and Human Services Policy; Heather Couri, Deputy Director of Education and Human Services Policy; Lindsay Fryer, Professional Staff Member; Rosemary Lahasky, Professional Staff Member; Nancy Locke, Chief Clerk; Krisann Pearce, General Counsel; Dan Shorts, Legislative Assistant; Nicole Sizemore, Deputy Press Secretary; Alex Sollberger, Communications Director; Alissa Strawcutter, Deputy Clerk; Brad Thomas, Senior Education Policy Advisor; Tylease Alli, Minority Clerk/Intern and Fellow Coordinator; Jeremy Ayers, Minority Education Policy Advisor; Kelly Broughan, Minority Education Policy Associate; Jamie Fasteau, Minority Director of Education Policy; Scott Groginsky, Minority Education Policy Advisor; Eunice Ikene, Minority Staff Assistant; Brian Levin, Minority Deputy Press Secretary/New Media Coordinator; and Megan O'Reilly, Minority General Counsel.

Chairman KLINE. A quorum being present, the committee will come to order.

Good morning. Welcome to our hearing to discuss opportunities to improve the Institute of Education Sciences.

I would like to extend a special welcome to our witnesses, whose testimony will provide valuable insight into ways we can better ensure parents, teachers, school leaders, and policymakers have access to the most relevant education research.

Established by the Education Sciences Reform Act in 2002, the Institute of Education Sciences is responsible for gathering information on education progress, conducting research on educational practices in the nation's schools, and examining the quality of federal education programs and initiatives. The information collected

and disseminated by the institute helps schools identify and implement successful education initiatives.

Additionally, the data allows taxpayers and congressional leaders to keep tabs on the federal investment in education, which is especially important in these times of fiscal restraint. The Education Sciences Reform Act has been due for reauthorization since 2008 and traditionally moves right after the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In July the House approved the committee's legislation to rewrite ESEA, known as the Student Success Act.

The Education Sciences Reform Act presents another opportunity to help provide teachers and parents the tools necessary to raise the bar in our schools and I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to develop smart policies that will improve the law.

To lay groundwork for the reauthorization, last year Ranking Member George Miller and I asked the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study on the effectiveness of the institute's research. Though the final report has yet to be released, we have received a few preliminary findings that highlight areas for improvement.

For example, GAO confirms the institute has greatly improved the quality of education research over the last decade but notes there is often a significant delay in disseminating key data and findings to education officials. As a result, the research is not always immediately relayed to parents and school leaders, reducing its usefulness and relevancy.

GAO also found the institute does not always properly evaluate the efficacy of its own programs and research arms, which could lead to unnecessary costs, confusion, and redundancies. Currently, the institute operates 10 regional labs and 12 research and development centers to conduct research, provide technical assistance, and distribute data. Meanwhile, the Department of Education operates five content centers and 16 comprehensive centers that serve some of the same purposes.

As we develop policies to strengthen the institute, we should consider streamlining the federal research structure to reduce duplication, enhance accountability, and make it easier for states and school districts to access important information. We must also ensure the Institute of Education Sciences has the flexibility necessary to modernize its research methods and keep up with new developments in education delivery and practice. Finally, we must acknowledge that the value of the institute's research depends on its political autonomy and take the necessary steps to protect the organization's independence.

We are fortunate to have with us several witnesses who can help us better understand what is and is not working with the Institute of Education Sciences, including a representative from GAO who can provide more information on the aforementioned study. Their testimony will inform our efforts to reauthorize the Education Sciences Reform Act and help us craft policies that will improve the quality and usefulness of education research.

With that, I now yield to my distinguished colleague, George Miller, the senior Democratic member of the committee, for his opening remarks.

[The statement of Chairman Kline follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. John Kline, Chairman,  
Committee on Education and the Workforce**

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Mr. MILLER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing.

As we begin the new school year our nation's schools stand on the threshold of major transitions. Schools are implementing new college and career ready standards, they are piloting new assessments aligned to those standards, and teachers and principals are being evaluated in new ways to measure and improve their effectiveness. Districts and states are implementing new accountability standards that focus intense efforts on turning around their most struggling schools.

These are seismic changes. To ensure that children benefit, we need to support robust research to identify what is working and what can be improved.

When Congress passed the Education Sciences Reform Act in 2002 we did so to complement the bipartisan effort of No Child Left Behind. We wanted to strengthen the quality and the rigor of education research and we wanted to take advantage of the new, rich data that would emerge from the NCLB requirements.

Eleven years later, thanks to NCLB and ESRA, we have a wealth of data that can be used to measure what is working for students, make corrections where things are not working, and create ways to ensure continuous improvement in the future. That is the task I hope this committee will take as we review ESRA.

In 2002 the quality of education research was lacking. Much of it was driven by politics rather than science. As a response, we created the Institute of Education Sciences. Its mission was to conduct scientifically rigorous research outside the influence of politics or trend of the moment.

Since then, IES has crafted high standards for the research it funds. It trains and supports researchers across the country and the studies are peer reviewed. A decade later, education research is more rigorous and sound.

However, research is not effective if it only answers abstract questions or only published in professional journals. Research must be relevant as well as rigorous. It must be widely shared with those who work with students in order to make a difference.

I am pleased that IES has taken steps in that direction. In 2012 IES overhauled the nation's 10 regional research labs. It did so by connecting them with research alliances and policymakers and practitioners. The alliances work with the labs to identify pressing education problems in schools and then the labs develop and test strategies for solving them.

Take New England, for example. The Northeastern regional lab created a research alliance on early childhood. That alliance gathered the region's early childhood stakeholders to create a research agenda that focuses on standards, assessments, and practices to improve early childhood education. The resulting research will now be more useful to practitioners that have a ready-made network for disseminating it.

As we examine ESRA and the role of IES I hope that we will keep this need for both rigor and relevance in mind. I hope that we will keep in mind that we in Congress must be good federal partners in this effort. That means we must provide stable and sufficient resources to IES to do its job.

The IES budget in 2012 fell just short of \$600 million. That is less than 1 percent of our overall federal education budget. Other fields invest far more in research and development.

We should take a serious look at this. More money is not always the answer, but sufficient money is.

Also, we must not forget that sequestration cuts this year are limiting research right now, and another round of cuts beginning in January could have a crippling impact in destabilizing ongoing and vital research. I hope that my colleagues will join me in seeking ways to invest in education research in a smart way that avoids waste but also is sound and avoids harmful austerity.

I thank all of the witnesses for appearing today and I am pleased that there is such an interest and leadership in addressing the



quality of education research in America, and I look forward to all of your testimony.

Thank you so much.

[The statement of Mr. Miller follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. George Miller, Senior Democratic Member,  
Committee on Education and the Workforce**

Chairman Kline, thank you for holding this important hearing. As we begin a new school year, our nation's schools stand on the threshold of major transitions.

Schools are implementing new college and career ready standards. And they are piloting new assessments aligned to those standards. Teachers and principals are being evaluated in new ways to measure and improve their effectiveness. Districts and states are implementing new accountability systems that focus intense efforts on turning around their most struggling schools.

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The IES budget for FY12 fell just short of \$600 million. That is less than 1 percent of our overall federal education budget. Other fields invest far more in research and development. We should take a serious look at this. More money is not always the answer, but sufficient money is.

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I thank all the witnesses for appearing today. I am pleased that there is such interest and leadership in addressing the quality of education research in America.

I look forward to your testimony. I yield back.

Chairman KLINE. Thank the gentleman.

Pursuant to committee rule 7(c), all committee members will be permitted to submit written statements to be included in the per-

manent hearing record, and without objection the hearing record will remain open for 14 days to allow statements, questions for the record, and other extraneous material referenced during the hearing to be submitted in the official hearing record.

It is now my pleasure to introduce our very distinguished panel of witnesses.

First, Mr. George A. Scott is the director for education, workforce, and income security with GAO. He has previously testified before both the House and Senate on the agency's work surrounding K-12 education and student financial aid programs.

Dr. Bridget Terry Long is the Xander professor of education and economics and academic dean at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She is also chair of the National Board for Education Sciences.

Dr. James Kemple is executive director of the Research Alliance for New York City Schools at New York University.

And Ms. Kathy Christie is the vice president for knowledge and information management and dissemination at the Education Commission of the States.

Welcome, all of you. Before I recognize each of you to provide your testimony let me remind you of our very nifty lighting system here.

You will each have 5 minutes to present your testimony. When you begin the light will turn green—no surprises here. When you have a minute left the light will turn yellow, and when your time is expired the light will turn red.

And I am reluctant to gavel a witness down but I would ask you to try to wrap up at that point so that each of you has a chance to provide your testimony and we have a chance to engage in a discussion.

I will now like to recognize Mr. Scott for 5 minutes.

Sir, you are recognized.

**STATEMENT OF GEORGE A. SCOTT, DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION, WORKFORCE, AND INCOME SECURITY ISSUES, U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE**

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you.

Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the preliminary results of our review of the Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, IES.

The Education Sciences Reform Act outlines a broad mission for IES, including to expand the knowledge and understanding of education and to provide this information to a wide range of stakeholders. My testimony will focus on the extent to which IES supports high quality research, disseminates relevant products to the education field, and coordinates within education and with other federal agencies.

In summary, we found that since its creation IES has substantially improved education research. In 2007 the Office of Management and Budget concluded that IES had transformed the quality and rigor of research within the Department of Education. It had also increased the demand for scientifically based evidence of effectiveness in the education field as a whole.

Many stakeholders said that IES's research standards improved the quality of and had a positive influence on education research.

While IES has improved the quality of education research, its research is sometimes of limited usefulness to policymakers and practitioners. Some stakeholders told us that the evaluations supported by IES may not be completed soon enough to inform important policy decisions. For example, officials from one organization said that IES's evaluation of the Race to the Top and school improvement grant programs will not be released in time to give the states opportunity to implement lessons learned from these studies before funding for these programs end.

To address concerns about the relevance of its research IES is soliciting feedback from stakeholders. For example, IES recently convened a group of state and local education officials to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the regional education labs and the What Works Clearinghouse.

Despite these efforts, IES does not have a systematic process for incorporating feedback from stakeholders into its research agenda. We consider having such a process to be a key element of promoting a sound federal research program.

Further, IES cannot demonstrate the impact of its efforts to improve the quality and relevance of its research in some areas. IES's performance measures no longer capture the full range of IES research and priorities. In some cases these measures are no longer relevant to managing the agency's operations.

Additionally, IES does not publicly report on the performance of the regional education labs, which constitute one of the agency's largest investments. As we have previously reported, without appropriate performance measures agencies may be at risk for failing to achieve their stated goals.

IES's research and technical assistance group have taken various steps to provide relevant research. They have engaged policymakers and practitioners in planning research and technical assistance activities. All three groups also use a range of methods to disseminate their products.

Despite these efforts, stakeholders have raised concerns. For example, some stakeholders said that they do not find research by the regional education labs to be as relevant or as timely as other sources of information. Stakeholders also noted that further efforts are needed to better market the research from these groups so that they reach intended audiences.

Finally, IES takes a number of steps to coordinate with other federal agencies to increase the use of research evidence in guiding funding decisions. IES also coordinates within Education to facilitate collaboration among various research programs.

However, despite these efforts, the Department of Education faces challenges in funding and prioritizing evaluations. According to Education officials, efforts to prioritize evaluation projects are hindered in part because of statutory requirements.

According to these officials, Education lacks the authority to combine evaluation funds from programs across the department and then use them to evaluate any other program. As a result, some evaluations may not occur and high priority evaluations may be delayed.

In conclusion, IES has made significant contributions to strengthening the rigor of education research. However, it could build on these efforts by continuing to improve its ability to provide timely and relevant information.

In addition, with a systematic process for incorporating stakeholder needs and more comprehensive and up-to-date performance measures IES would position itself to more fully achieve its mission. Also, the ability to prioritize evaluations is critical to helping the Congress make informed decisions about programs. As we complete our work we will consider any recommendations needed to address these issues.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my remarks. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Scott may be accessed at the following Internet address:]

*<http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/657669.pdf>*

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Chairman KLINE. Thank you very much.  
Dr. Long, you are recognized.

**STATEMENT OF DR. BRIDGET TERRY LONG, XANDER PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION AND ECONOMICS, ACADEMIC DEAN, HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, CHAIR, NATIONAL BOARD FOR EDUCATION SCIENCES, INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES**

Ms. LONG. Thank you, and good morning.

Chairman Kline and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. As noted, I am also chair of the National Board for Education Sciences.

The board is independent of IES and we are tasked with advising the IES director and reviewing and evaluating its work. In this way, we provide a critical but also constructive perspective on the activities of IES.

My testimony reflects the discussions and recommendations by the board as well as my observations as an experienced researcher.

As we work to raise student achievement, foster productive learning environments, and bolster the social contributions of our schools and universities, the knowledge, inventions, and partnerships created through education research are essential. It is through research that we determine the best ways to produce the needed gains and help to make tough decisions about how to use our limited funds.

During the short history of IES it has filled an essential role in providing and encouraging the necessary conditions for high quality research in education. I focused my comments on three main contributions.

First, IES has taken the role of creating a series of important public goods. By “public goods” I mean things that benefit us all, but many of these goods would not have been produced without government intervention.

As noted by Chairman Kline, IES provides the foundations of factual information and research with the collection of clear, con-

sistent, high quality data. Additionally, IES serves as a repository and distribution center of objective research.

This is vitally important because the education space is filled with many organizations, companies, and individuals who have varying objectives, agendas, and degrees of expertise. Therefore, it can be difficult to discern between the many studies, reports, and assertions of what is fact versus what is fiction, and IES stands as the best authority of rigorous research free from influence.

Second, IES has led the way in efforts to reevaluate and redefine the standard of what is considered the best evidence. Before the creation of IES many lamented that education research was failing to answer important educational questions in convincing ways. One example of what IES has done is push for randomized control trials, which is a gold standard in research and often used in the field of medicine.

By providing support and encouraging researchers to develop ways of conducting RCTs while still being sensitive to the needs of students, education research has progressed in fundamental ways with new, important evidence on the effects of key programs and interventions. Moreover, IES continues to engage the field in conversations about rigor, as demonstrated by technical work groups tasked with ensuring that evaluations provide unbiased assessments.

Third, IES has influenced the kind of research that is done. While there are many organizations that conduct education research, most focus on only a handful of topics and are only able to do projects of limited size. But education is all encompassing, from the wide array of the types of students, environments, needs, and goals, and there is much work to be done.

With a national platform, IES has the unique ability to leverage researcher and practitioner expertise by signaling and providing incentives to conduct studies on issues of importance for the country. This includes large-scale projects that would not otherwise be conducted but shed an considerable light on important issues.

Another contribution has been to emphasize the importance of partnerships with researchers and schools, districts, and educational agencies. By working closely with the field, researchers are much more likely to produce research that is relevant and useful in practice.

Finally, it is important to note that IES has been instrumental in attracting talent to the study of education with training, tools, and resources to support high quality research.

While the accomplishments of IES are numerous, the board and IES are committed to continuous improvement. As noted earlier, IES has filled a gap for the nation by providing clear, objective information. However, more could be done to communicate and disseminate this information.

This is a challenging feat. Education has an incredibly large range of stakeholders and multiple audiences to address, including policymakers, practitioners—from teachers, to superintendents, to state agencies—researchers, and students and their families. Each group needs different kinds of information in different forms.

There are many examples of success and promise. For example, the practice guides distill a wealth of research into clear steps for teachers to take to improve the learning of students.

Additionally, there have been many efforts to improve the work of IES. They include revisions to the Web site, establishing a grant competition to create a research and development center on knowledge utilization. To ensure reliance and usability IES has also revised and renegotiated the contracts for the RELs and just last month convened a product feedback and development meeting with stakeholders from across the country.

I have also entered into the record a full list of the board's recommendations regarding ESRA.

[The information follows:]

**THE NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION SCIENCES (NBES)**  
*Advisory Board to the Director of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES),  
U.S. Department of Education Dr. Bridget Terry Long, Chair*

**Recommendations for the Reauthorization of the  
Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA)**

At the June 20, 2012 NBES meeting, Board members discussed recommendations to revise ESRA. These recommendations build from previous suggestions made by the NBES in May 2008 with several additional changes and revisions. The recommendations fall into three categories:

- Definitional changes
- Substantive changes in the Institute or Board's functioning or powers
- Administrative or "housekeeping" changes to the bill

DEFINITIONAL CHANGES

*1. Definitions related to "Scientific Research," etc.*

On pages 4-5, we recommend changes related to definitions of "scientific research." Congress has moved towards defining principles of scientific research rather than defining scientifically-based research. As noted on page 5, the NBES agrees with the Department of Education's position that any definition of "scientific research," etc. in ESRA should be consistent with the definitions used in other bills such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

*2. Changes in IES's mission*

On page 7, the NBES recommends modifying the initial lines of IES's mission to read:

The mission of the Institute is to provide national leadership in expanding reliable evidence on which to ground education practice and policy and to encourage its use by parents, educators, students, researchers, policymakers, and the general public  
\* \* \*

The major differences between our recommendation and the original are to replace "expanding fundamental knowledge" with "expanding reliable evidence" and to add the words "encourage its use". The new definition, which focuses on providing evidence and encouraging its use, is much closer to what IES does and is more objective than the existing definition's focus on fundamental knowledge and understanding.

Note: This is not marked on the attached draft.

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES RELATED TO POWERS, FUNCTIONS, AND TERMS OF OFFICE

*1. Delegation of "Other Activities"*

Changes on page 9 would leave it at the discretion of the IES Director to accept additional assignments from the Secretary of Education if they were consistent with IES's mission and priorities. The existing language gives the Secretary the power to simply assign such activities to IES.

*2. Provisions related to the IES Director*

Page 9 removes language which is no longer relevant related to the appointment of the first IES Director. In addition, language is added making it possible for a Director to be nominated for a second term, and for a sitting Director to serve up to an additional year if his/her successor has not been appointed.

Additional new language on page 9-10 makes the IES Director eligible for “critical pay” under the Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004. The explanatory note in the mark-up states, “Many people who might be qualified to be Director are unwilling to do so over a 6 year term at the rate of pay [specified in existing law]. This addition provides pay flexibility in recruiting a director, and would be subject to the recommendation of the Board.” Page 13 adds the language related to the Board’s ability to make recommendations in this area.

New language on page 10 specifies that the IES Director reports directly to the Secretary of Education. The explanatory note in the mark-up states, “A direct reporting line to the Secretary is important to maintaining the status and independent functioning of IES within the Department.”

*3. Requirement that IES Director submit a biennial plan of activities to the Board for advice*

Page 10 adds new language to the Director’s duties requiring him/her to submit a biennial plan of activities to the Board every two years. New language on page 12 adds reviewing and advising the Director on the plan of activities to the Board’s duties. (Note that the Board’s approval of the plan is not required.)

*4. NBES: Organizations that advise the President on Board members*

Existing language in ESRA requires the President to solicit advice regarding individuals to serve on the Board from the National Academy of Sciences, the National Science Board, and the National Science Advisor. New language on page 13 would add the Board itself, the American Educational Research Association, the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, and the National Academy of Education to the list of groups that the President must solicit advice from.

*5. NBES: Board terms*

Page 14 includes a number of changes aimed at fixing some of the difficulties that the Board has consistently encountered since its founding, including numerous vacancies and attenuated terms.

Page 14 adds language specifying that a member’s 4-year term commences from the date of their appointment. Current practice has been to appoint members to 4-year slots, whose beginning and end dates are calculated based on three cohorts tied to the original legislation. That is: there are five Board slots tied to an initial term expiration date of 11/28/08; five Board slots tied to an initial term expiration date of 11/28/06; and five Board slots tied to an initial term expiration date of 11/28/07. If a Board member was nominated or confirmed to a slot that was close to its expiration date, their effective term dating from their actual appointment might be as short as a year. Page 14 also strikes language which is no longer relevant related to the initial appointment of Board members to staggered terms.

Page 14 also adds a new provision (similar to the provision for the IES Director) allowing Board members to serve up to an additional year after their term has expired if their successor has not been appointed.

The net effect of the changes listed on page 14 will be to greatly reduce the number of unfilled vacancies on the Board and to make it much more likely that at all times the Board will have close to its full complement of 15 members that ESRA stipulates.

*6. NBES: Executive Director*

New language on page 15 of the mark-up provides greater detail regarding the Executive Director position. Board members favored revising ESRA to give the Board hiring and evaluation authority over the NBES Executive Director.

*7. NBES: Charitable contributions*

New language on page 16 would allow the Board to accept charitable donations to further the mission of the Board. This would allow the Board to provide coffee during advisory board meetings.

*8. NBES: Standing committee structure*

Pages 16 strikes language related to NBES’s standing committee structure. The existing language specifies a standing Board committee corresponding to each national education center (e.g., NCES, NCER). The Board has never functioned this way in practice. This is due, in part, to the fact that at times Board membership has dwindled to as few as 6 members.

In place of the struck language, the mark-up adds new permissive language on page 16 that allows the Board to establish standing committees related to the Board’s responsibilities.

#### *9. Commissioner's pay*

Similar to the new language related to the IES Director's pay, page 18 adds language allowing Commissioners to be eligible for critical pay under the provisions of Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004. The rationale is similar to that for the IES Director: to enhance recruitment flexibility for Commissioners.

#### *10. The appointment process for the NCES Commissioner*

Page 18 has existing language that has the NCES Commissioner be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The Board made no recommendation regarding changing to the appointment process for the NCES Commissioner, because opinion was evenly divided among the members. Some felt strongly that the current requirement that the NCES Commissioner be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate reflects a hard-won acknowledgment that education statistics deserve national-level prestige. Others instead felt that the procedure for appointing the NCES Commissioner should be the same as that for the other IES Center commissioners to support smooth and efficient functioning of IES.

#### *11. National Research and Development Centers*

Pages 21-22 strike existing language related to National Research and Development Centers and replaces it with a section titled, "Priorities for Long-Term Research Activities." The changes remove language requiring the funding of at least eight National R&D Centers as well as requirements related to the topics assigned to the centers. The replacement language does not address the number of centers funded and allows the NCER Commissioner to choose topics consistent with IES's priorities. The feeling is that the NCER commissioner and the director, with the counsel of the Board, should be able to determine the best funding mechanisms and funding levels for advancing IES's long-term research priorities rather than having Congress earmark particular centers and levels of funding.

#### *12. Removal of privacy protection for individual school information*

Page 41 strikes language giving privacy protection to individually identifiable information with respect to individual schools. The explanatory note in the mark-up states that, "Schools do not receive privacy protection elsewhere in federal statute or regulations. Many IES reports from NCES require that schools be identified, e.g., the Common Core of Data. The prohibition on revealing school identity means that useful information must be omitted from evaluation reports. There is no compelling reason to maintain this protection for schools."

#### *13. Adjustment to the circumstances under which the Director or Board members may be removed*

Pages 45-46 add language that allows the President to remove the Director and any Board member for cause, although the President must inform the Board of the cause for which the appointee is being removed. The original language did not include the words "for cause," nor was Board notification required. The original language also included the Commissioner for Education Statistics in these provisions. However, the mark-up's proposed change to make the Commissioner of Education Statistics a Director-appointed position, like the other Commissioners, means that the Commissioner should be struck from the provisions of this section.

#### *14. Expansion of authorization related to data bases to be included in the statewide longitudinal data systems*

Page 52 adds language specifying the Higher Education Act and IDEA with regard to the development of statewide longitudinal data systems. The existing language only specifies the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The change expands the authority so that a broader range of educational records can be incorporated into the supported data systems.

#### *15. NAEP reports*

Pages 55 and 57 add language related to authority over the content and release of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports. The mark-up's explanatory note states, "There are ongoing disputes between NCES and the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) on the content and formatting of NAEP reports \* \* \* These are IES/NCES reports published under the authority of the Director and Commissioner. The NCES commissioner needs to retain responsibility for the content of the reports." And, "NAGB has taken the position that the NCES commissioner's role at the release event is entirely at the discretion of NAGB. Because the findings being released are from an NCES statistical report, the commissioner or his delegate should be responsible for presenting the findings."



## ADMINISTRATIVE/HOUSEKEEPING CHANGES

*1. Delegation of authority*

Page 8 contain new language aimed at delineating the delegation of authority between the IES Director and the Secretary of Education.

*2. Removal of language related to the role of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB)*

Four provisions related to NAGB are struck on pages 8-9. The rationale given was that a preceding paragraph clearly articulated NAGB's role and so the subsequent four provisions were redundant.

*3. Other changes in the Director's duties*

Page 10 changes language related to peer review from "establish" to "maintain," reflecting the fact that peer review procedures have already been established.

Another change on page 11 specifies that the Director will coordinate with the Secretary of Education to insure that IES's findings are used by all of ED's technical assistance providers, and not just the 15 comprehensive assistance centers.

*4. Review of publications, not "products"*

Page 11 strikes the term "products" from the section pertaining to the Director's review of evidence-based claims in ED publications. The rationale is that IES cannot review products, only publications that make scientific claims.

*5. Requirement that IES priorities be proposed every 6 years*

New language on page 11 requires the IES Director to submit priorities for the Institute to the Board for approval at least every 6 years. This would put into statute what has occurred in practice.

*6. Peer review standards and NCER*

Page 19 strikes language requiring the National Center for Education Research (NCER) to maintain peer review standards. This would conform to IES's actual practice, which is to have the Scientific Review Office maintain IES's standards related to peer review.

*7. Replacing 'Commissioner' with 'Center'*

Pages 26 and 29 replace 'Commissioner' with 'Center' for the sake of consistency.

*8. Removal of outdated language related to NCEE*

Page 32 strikes language regarding the award of specific contracts which is outdated and not relevant for reauthorization. Similarly, pages 34-35 strikes additional outdated language that is not relevant to reauthorization.

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[An additional submission, the document, "NBES Markup, June 2012, Education Sciences Reform, Public Law 107-279," may be accessed at the following Internet address:]

*<http://ies.ed.gov/director/board/pdf/NBESmarkupESRA.pdf>*

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Ms. LONG. So in summary, IES has made many contributions, though there is still work to be done, and we look forward to this discussion.

Thank you.

[The statement of Dr. Long follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Dr. Bridget Terry Long, Ph.D., Xander Professor of Education and Economics Academic Dean, Harvard Graduate School of Education; Chair, National Board for Education Sciences**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Dr. Bridget Terry Long, and I am the Academic Dean and Xander Professor of Education and Economics at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Beyond my expertise as a researcher and faculty member, I am also the Chair of the National Board for Education Sciences, the advisory board of the Institute of

Education Sciences (IES). The National Board for Education Sciences is independent of IES, and we are tasked with advising the Director and reviewing and evaluating the work of IES. In this way, we provide a critical but also constructive perspective on the activities of IES.

My testimony reflects discussions and recommendations made by the Board as well as my observations as an experienced educational researcher who has interacted with IES on many levels. My comments today aim to provide an objective assessment of the role of IES, its contributions, and areas for improvement.

#### *The Role of IES*

In our current environment, educational research has become even more important as the penalties of poor achievement and lack of opportunity have never been greater. As we work to raise student achievement, foster productive learning environments, and bolster the social contributions of our schools and universities, the knowledge, inventions, and partnerships created through educational research are essential—it is through research that we determine the best ways to produce the needed gains and help to make tough decisions about how to use our limited funds. Before we can debate what policies we should implement, we first need a clear understanding of the facts and to have an accurate sense of the real costs and benefits of any policy or program. In essence, research is the foundation for improving education.

During the short history of IES, it has filled an essential role in providing and encouraging the necessary conditions for high-quality education research. While its impact is evident in many ways, I focus my comments on three main contributions. First, IES has taken the role of creating a series of public goods that no one else would or could do without concerns about possible bias. Second, it has led the way in efforts to reevaluate and redefine the standard of what is considered good evidence. Third, IES has influenced the kind of educational research that is done by making possible large-scale studies, pushing researchers to work closely with practitioners to ensure relevance and usability, and holding an unwavering focus on serving the national good.

##### *(1) Creating Necessary Public Goods*

As a federal entity, IES has taken leadership to provide several key public goods needed to support a strong educational system and research. By public goods, I mean things that benefit us all, but many of these goods would not otherwise be produced without government intervention. For example, IES provides the foundations of factual information and research with the collection of clear, consistent, high-quality data through the National Center for

Education Statistics (NCES).<sup>1</sup> It is through the efforts of IES, which conducts its work free from political influence, that we are able to understand trends in our student populations, schools and universities, and an array of inputs and outcomes that span early childhood to adult education. These data also make possible a wealth of research conducted on every aspect of education.

Additionally, IES serves as a repository and distribution center of research, both studies funded by IES and those that are not. The dissemination and communication of objective information is a critical one for the nation. The education space is filled with many organizations, companies, and individuals who have varying objectives, agendas, and degrees of expertise. Therefore, it can be difficult to sort between the many studies, reports, and assertions to determine what is fact versus what is fiction. Moreover, the research community often lacks the training and incentives to translate complex research for a lay audience. In such a crowded space, IES stands as the best authority of rigorous research free from influence. It has helped to clarify what is known about issues related to large educational debates. Moreover, it has been helpful in discerning between conflicting and confusing reports on important issues. It has used its convening power to bring together researchers from various backgrounds to discuss the issues and coordinate research.<sup>2</sup> It has also conducted evaluations of federal initiatives.<sup>3</sup>

##### *(2) Setting the Standards of “Good Evidence”*

Before the creation of IES, many lamented that educational research was failing to answer important questions in convincing ways. The varying quality of research and lack of attention to certain issues led some to dismiss the educational research base as inadequate. IES has changed this dramatically by leading a critical assessment of past research and initiating a number of debates about what are appropriate methods and standards of rigor for the different approaches to educational research.

One concrete example of this has been the push for randomized controlled trials (RCTs), which are considered the gold-standard of research and often used in the

field of medicine. Prior to IES's leadership, RCTs were rarely conducted in education and not valued among many researchers. However, by pushing the field, providing support, and engaging researchers to develop ways of conducting such analyses while still being sensitive to needs of students and practitioners, educational research has progressed in fundamental ways with new important evidence on the effects of key programs and interventions. For example, in my own work with several colleagues, which was partially funded by IES, we demonstrated that providing low- and moderate-income families with streamlined personal assistance to complete the federal college financial aid application had large effects on college attendance and persistence. Because we used a randomized controlled trial design, we were able to establish convincingly that our intervention was not only the cause of the educational gains; importantly, the program was also inexpensive.<sup>4</sup>

IES continues to engage the field in conversations about rigor in educational research. This is demonstrated by technical working groups that are establishing standards for specific research methodologies and helping to ensure that evaluations provide unbiased and causally-valid assessments.<sup>5</sup> It is also worth noting that IES has developed a rigorous peer review process for evaluating grant proposals.

### *(3) Encouraging Relevant, Rigorous Research for the National Good*

IES has used its resources and convening power to focus the field on research that is both rigorous and focused on shedding light on the major problems facing the country. By setting priorities and crafting calls for research proposals (i.e., Requests for Proposals or RFPs), IES has sent signals to the field about important topics that need answers, rigorous standards that must be upheld, and the importance of conducting research in partnership with practitioners.

Additionally, it has made possible research studies that would not have otherwise been conducted.

While there are private foundations and other organizations that support educational research, most focus on only a handful of topics and fund projects of limited size. But education is all encompassing, from the wide array of types of students, environments, needs, and goals, and there is much work to be done. With a national platform, IES has the unique ability to leverage researcher and practitioner expertise by signaling and providing incentives to conduct studies on issues of importance for the country. One way it has done this is by designing research competitions that focus on the major issues and areas of education. Along with this has come IES's emphasis on the importance of external validity in research, meaning that it has called for researchers to be accountable to external audiences on how the findings for one set of schools might be applicable to another set of schools.

IES has also been able to support large-scale projects that could not be easily funded by others. To learn more certain issues, studies must be large in scale and compare the experiences of districts across states or large populations of students. Without support from IES, this type of work would often not be possible, and the knowledge base that is being built as a result of this work has been valuable in improving student outcomes. Taken together, IES has both insured research on a breadth of topics while also making possible large-scale studies that have been incredibly beneficial to our understanding of how to help students.

Another way IES has influenced the research community is by highlighting the importance of partnerships between researchers and schools, districts, or state educational agencies. Because the delivery of education is the result of many actors, research can often be improved by being designed and conducted while working with practitioners. Additionally, by working closely with the field, researchers are much more likely to produce research that is relevant and useful in practice. However, such work can be difficult to manage and implement.

IES has pushed and supported such connections to the benefit of the research being conducted.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, it is important to note that IES has been instrumental in attracting talent to the study of education. With the signals it sends about important issues in education and the support it gives for research, IES has helped to attract a growing number of researchers with the tools and resources to support high-quality research and partner with the field. IES is helping to produce the next generation of scholars and innovators who will help to solve important problems in education.

### *The Strengths, Challenges, and Continuous Improvement of IES*

The accomplishments of IES are numerous, and the researchers and innovators supported by IES funding will continue to have positive impacts on the lives of students as well as many other parts of our society. Nevertheless, in light of the Board and IES's commitment to continuous improvement, it is clear more can and needs to be done. In this spirit, the Board has worked to advise, review, and advance the

activities of IES. The Board has matured to be an important place of feedback and expertise, and my comments here reflect continuing discussions between the Board and IES staff about how to address challenges facing the organization.

As I noted earlier, the dissemination and communication role of IES is an important one.

IES has filled a gap for the nation by providing clear, objective information and making it available to the public. While IES is a strong producer and supporter of information of value, it is still building capacity and expertise on how to disseminate that information, including methods that use the latest technology and outreach methods. This is a challenging feat. Unlike many other fields, education has large range of stakeholders and multiple audiences to address, including policymakers; practitioners from teachers to superintendents to state agencies; researchers; and students and their families. Each group needs different kinds of information in different forms.

The Board and IES staff believe strongly in the dissemination role of IES, and we have held a number of discussions on how to improve efforts. There are many examples of success and promise. For example, the Practice Guides distill a wealth of research into clear steps teachers can take to improve the learning of their students.<sup>7</sup> The What Works Clearinghouse was created with the idea of helping the public understand research results and whether they were completed using rigorous methods. The dissemination of recent data reports and grant competitions include webinars and video media.<sup>8</sup>

However, more could be done in terms of reaching out to the many audiences of educational data and research, and there are many efforts underway at IES to address this challenge. They include:

- Revisions to the website to make it easier to find important research and facts. For instance, a new contract was awarded this year to manage and enhance the What Works Clearinghouse.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, as part of the RFP for the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), the contractor is expected to redesign the IES website to improve search capabilities and provide basic orientations to key topics and references for relatively inexperienced users.<sup>10</sup>
- IES added new requirements to research grant competitions for researchers to develop dissemination plans for their studies. Moreover, NCSER released a report on how to make research more understandable, and it was presented to its grant recipients.<sup>11</sup>
- Establishing a grant competition to create a Research and Development Center on Knowledge Utilization. This Center will explore questions of how education researchers can make their work more relevant and useful to practitioners located in state and local education agencies and in individual schools. This work is meant to address concerns that often there is only limited adoption of evidence-based practices.<sup>12</sup>

Related to the issue of dissemination is the relevance and usability of the research produced and funded by IES. This has been a major focus of IES, and there are many instances of the Institute meeting this goal. As noted above, the growing attention to the importance of partnerships has broadened the number of studies done in concert with schools and districts, and this approach increases the likelihood that the results will be relevant and useful for practitioners. Still, this has been an area of constant reevaluation, and there have been many activities recently to improve this function of IES. For example:

- Revising and renegotiating the contracts for the Regional Education Labs (RELs). For example, earlier this year, IES released revised criteria for REL proposals and products. The criteria focus on issues related to the technical rigor of products (e.g., data quality, analysis methods), the relevance of the work (i.e., whether it provides evidence that can inform a practitioner's action or decision), and the readability of the products (i.e., whether the information is clear for its intended audiences). NCEE has also been working to build the capacity of the REL program by conducting webinars to help the RELs meet increasing standards in writing, collaboration, and measurement.<sup>13</sup>
- Just recently, on August 12, 2013, IES convened a Product Feedback and Development Meeting with stakeholders from across the country to get suggestions about how to improve the usability and relevance of the products and services of the WWC and RELs.<sup>14</sup>

As an independent body tasked with providing constructive feedback to IES, the Board has been pleased with the fact that our feedback and that of others on these issues has been incorporated into the work of the Institute, and we believe these activities will help to strengthen IES's impact.

Another challenge facing IES is balancing the need to work in many areas with the reality of having limited resources. Because it is important to understand so

many facets of education and the populations it impacts, it can be difficult to prioritize some areas over others or to decide not to fund research in some areas at all. Tough choices sometimes have to be made. For instance, this year, IES will not hold research competitions in special education.<sup>15</sup> However, IES is not taking a haphazard approach to this dilemma. Recent discussions between the Board and IES staff have concerned if and how the Institute might decide to prioritize funding decisions. Moreover, IES is attempting to understand and improve the impact of the overall portfolio of research supported with IES funding. Together, we have been examining the research portfolios of NCER and NCSER to understand how IES might better target its research funding.

#### *Revising ESRA: Recommendations from the NBES*

At the June 20, 2012 NBES meeting, Board members discussed specific recommendations to revise ESRA. These recommendations build from previous suggestions made by the Board in May 2008 with several additional changes and revisions. Most notably, we suggest:

- Establishing a requirement that the IES Director submit a biennial plan of activities to the Board for advice. Currently, the IES Director is only required to submit his or her priorities to the Board every six years. Although the Board has many informal opportunities to provide feedback to the Director based on the strong working relationship between the current Board and current Director, the expectation of more frequent formal feedback should be documented.
- Changing the term of a Board member to commence from the date of confirmation so that members have a full four years of service
- Automatically extending by one year the terms of Board members whose successors have not yet been appointed; this would help to ensure that the Board always has a sufficient number of members to be effective
- Giving the Board hiring and evaluation authority over the NBES Executive Director to ensure this role is independent of IES given the assessment duties of the Board
- Allowing for flexibility in the pay of the IES Director and Commissioners by making these positions eligible for “critical pay” under the Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004
- Removing privacy protection for individual schools in data reports, a protection that does not exist in any other federal statute or regulation. The current prohibition on revealing school identity means that useful information must be omitted from evaluation reports.

A full list of our recommendations and a marked-up copy of ESRA have been entered into the official record.

#### *Conclusions*

In summary, to have an informed populace and clarity on how best to educate our children and ourselves, there must be a robust foundation of high-quality data, rigorous, objective research and strong communication of evidence on what works and what does not. It is clear that IES has made substantial contributions to our understanding of how to improve education and is engaged in activities to address the challenges it faces. There is more work to be done, and as noted by our recommendations, the Board believes some changes to ESRA would improve the functioning of IES and the Board for the continued benefit of the country.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Before the creation of IES, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) led efforts to collect educational data. IES has built upon these surveys in its current activities.

<sup>2</sup>For example, the National Center for Education Research (NCER) serves as a hub to facilitate collaboration among a diverse, interdisciplinary group of researchers who are a part of the Reading for Understanding Initiative (RfU). NCER is funding six research teams to advance theories and develop interventions to improve reading comprehension from pre-K through grade 12. Five of the teams are testing interventions to improve reading comprehension through a variety of curricula, supplemental materials, and professional development opportunities.

<sup>3</sup>For instance, in September 2012, NCEE released the State and District Receipt of Recovery Act Funds: A Report from Charting the Progress of Education Reform—An Evaluation of the Recovery Act’s Role, which documents how funding was spent and includes the characteristics of funded schools and districts, amounts, etc. It is part of a larger study of major Federal funding efforts and reflects an NCEE effort to get interim reports out to the public more quickly.

<sup>4</sup>Bettinger, Eric P., Bridget Terry Long, Philip Oreopoulos, and Lisa Sanbonmatsu. (2012) “The Role of Application Assistance and Information in College Decisions: Results from the H&R Block FAFSA Experiment,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 127, no. 3, pp. 1205-1242.

<sup>5</sup>NCEE formed the technical methods group to work on issues and strategies that assure evaluations of education interventions provide unbiased and causally valid assessments. The technical methods working group aims to advance and provide guidance for those specialists who

are embarking on evaluations in education. More information is available here: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/tech-methods/>

<sup>6</sup>For instance, in 2012, IES created the Research-Practitioner Partnerships in Education Research program, which supports partnering around issues and problems of practice identified by the state and local education agencies. It is administered by the National Center for Education Research (NCER) as part of the research grant program.

<sup>7</sup>One example of a Practice Guide is Teaching Elementary School Students To Be Effective Writers, which was released by the What Works Clearinghouse. It offers a framework and examples, and is part of NCEE's interest in providing practice guides that are narrowly focused and useful to classroom teachers.

<sup>8</sup>For example, to explain the new NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy (TEL) assessment, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), created a video. The video describes what the assessment covers, gives examples, and makes clear that the goal of the assessment is to learn whether students have the skills needed to address the challenges of our evolving society. Additionally, an online tutorial allows users to get a sense of the test. More information is available here: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/tel/>

<sup>9</sup>Report from the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) to the NBES concerning activities from March to May 2013.

<sup>10</sup>Report from the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) to the NBES concerning activities from October 2012 to February 2013.

<sup>11</sup>The report entitled, Translating the Statistical Representation of the Effects of Education Interventions into More Readily Interpretable Forms, can be found here: <http://ies.ed.gov/nceser/pubs/20133000/>

<sup>12</sup>More information is available here: <http://ies.ed.gov/funding/ncer-rfas/randd.asp>

<sup>13</sup>Report from the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) to the NBES concerning activities from March to May 2013.

<sup>14</sup>More information is available here: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/event.aspx?sid=28>

<sup>15</sup>The National Center for Special Education Research (NCSEER) will not hold research or research training competitions for FY 2014. Researchers interested in the study of children, youth, and adults with disabilities may be eligible for funding under the NCER competitions.

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Chairman KLINE. Thank you very much.  
Dr. Kemple, you are recognized.

**STATEMENT OF DR. JAMES KEMPLE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
RESEARCH ALLIANCE FOR NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS, NEW  
YORK UNIVERSITY**

Mr. KEMPLE. Chairman Kline and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Continuing the theme, from my perspective as an educator and researcher for more than 30 years, the Education Sciences Reform Act and the Institute of Education Sciences have produced incredibly important changes in the quality, quantity, and use of education research.

Until ESRA and IES, education research was allowed to function at a standard that would never pass muster in public health, employment and training, welfare policy, let alone agriculture and medicine. The dearth of good evidence in education and the inability to effectively communicate lessons from the little evidence that did exist left us with a legacy of repeatedly reinventing the wheel and chasing fads rather than building a reliable and useful track record of what worked, what did not work, for whom, and under what conditions.

While I believe we are much better off than we were 12 years ago prior to IES, I think we are still burdened with that legacy from more than two generations of ineffective research.

From a pure numbers perspective, IES has commissioned and released findings from 90 studies that now meet the widely agreed upon gold standard for research—the randomized controlled trial. To my knowledge, that is 89 more such studies than both of IES's predecessors combined had produced, and there are many more in the pipeline.

However, I believe IES's influence extends well beyond the scientific research studies and the activities it has supported over the last 12 years. The principals embedded in ESRA and in IES's work have also changed the way that federal, state, and local policymakers evaluate and use education research.

In New York City, where I lead a partnership with the city's schools, the schools' chancellor, most senior staff in the New York City Department of Education, and, yes, even the mayor now ask pointed questions about whether the research that they are presented with meets the appropriate scientific standards. And I am also encouraged by the fact that when they do see high quality evidence they are much more inclined to use the resulting evidence in their decision-making even when that evidence suggests that programs are ineffective and should probably be discontinued.

I think it is also worth noting that IES has supported training programs to develop a new generation of researchers and research organizations that are equipped to meet those higher standards of evidence.

So in short, from my perspective the transformations that have occurred under IES have moved education research much closer to the caliber of research conducted for decades within the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor and the NIH.

Now, while applauding IES's many important accomplishments, I would also describe it as a work in progress. There are several areas where I think the institute can be improved.

First, in some cases I believe IES has promoted scientific rigor at the expense of policy and practical relevance. Second, IES has not invested enough in building partnerships and lines of communications between researchers and policymakers and practitioners, and those are just the people that should inform and benefit from the work that we produce. And then third, I think IES can be smarter in the strategies it uses to make its work accessible.

My sense is that the original framework established by ESRA already provides for advancement in each of these areas, and I think IES is headed in the right direction. The key challenges, I believe, lie in helping the current leadership of IES continue to make strides in each of the directions I just outlined.

So I want to suggest four core principles that I believe should guide the further strengthening of IES, and I will call these the four Ps: P1, preserve scientific rigor; P2, prioritize relevance for policymakers and practitioners; P3, promote wider use of high quality evidence; and P4, prepare for the future.

Under P1, I think it is specifically important for IES to continue to place a premium on funding research that establishes strong, causal connections between specific education policies and practices and the outcomes that we care most about for our students: achievement in literacy, mathematics, and the sciences, social development, and preparation for college and careers.

P2: In prioritizing rigorous research that is more relevant to policymakers and practitioners I think we have two challenges here. One is strengthening the relationships and collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners; and the second is ensuring that our studies address critical questions about how and why education practices and policies work or do not work, not just

the thumbs up did they work or not. I think in some cases IES's pursuit of rigor has sometimes narrowed the scope of research to the thumbs up, thumbs down, did it work or not.

And in promoting wider use and application of research, I think it is important that IES treat dissemination as a continuous process, not just an event that occurs at the end of a study, and that they make smarter uses of technology to promote and disseminate its work.

And then finally, P4: In preparing a next generation of education researchers who are committed to scientific rigor, I believe IES should continue its support for the pre-and post-doctoral training programs that are ensuring that our best and brightest are going into the field of education research.

Let me conclude by saying this is one of the most important issues—education, evidence-building—that the federal government can play in supporting education throughout the United States and I urge the committee to take up the reauthorization of ESRA. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Kemple follows:]

**Prepared Statement of James J. Kemple Executive Director,  
Research Alliance for New York City Schools at New York University**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee: My name is Jim Kemple. I serve as the founding Executive Director of the Research Alliance for New York City Schools at New York University. Our organization is a nonpartisan research center that conducts rigorous studies on topics that matter to the policymakers, educators and other stakeholders who work with New York City's public schools. We strive to advance equity and excellence in education by providing evidence about policies and practices that promote student success. Prior to my current position, I worked for 18 years at MDRC, overseeing scientific evaluations of education, welfare-to-work, and employment and training initiatives across the country. Before that, I served as director for the Higher Achievement Program here in DC, and I taught high school math.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I can think of few more important roles for the federal government to play in education than its support for building and communicating rigorous evidence about what works to improve teaching and learning across the country. The current economic and fiscal environment makes it more important than ever to use scientific evidence to inform difficult decisions about how to allocate scarce resources, and to invest in building more and better evidence about the efforts we make to strengthen our schools, particularly efforts that flow from the federal government.

From my perspective as an educator and researcher for more than 30 years, the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA) and the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) have produced incredibly important changes. Until ESRA and the creation of IES, education research was allowed to function at standards that would never pass muster with public health, employment and training, or welfare policy, let alone with medicine or agriculture. As a nation, we have paid a heavy price. The paucity of good evidence in education, and the inability to effectively communicate lessons from the little scientific evidence that did exist, left us with a legacy of reinventing the wheel and chasing fads rather than building a reliable and useful track record of what worked, what did not work, for whom and under what circumstances. While I believe we are much better off now than we were 12 years ago, we are still saddled by that legacy.

Since its inception, IES has funded and released findings from 90 studies that meet the widely agreed-upon "gold standard" for research, the randomized controlled trial. That's 89 more such studies than all of IES's predecessors combined. However, I believe IES's influence extends well beyond the specific research studies and activities it has supported. It has changed the way federal, state, and local policymakers evaluate and use education research.

In New York City, where I lead a research partnership with the city schools, the Mayor, the Schools Chancellor, and most senior staff in the Department of Education now ask pointed questions about whether the research that is presented to



them meets scientific standards. When they see high-quality research, they are much more inclined to use the resulting evidence in their decision-making. For example, New York City discontinued its use of financial incentives for school performance in the face of solid evidence that these incentives did not improve student achievement. By the same token, the City has reinforced its commitment to creating and sustaining small schools of choice, citing scientific evidence that these schools are significantly improving graduation and college readiness rates, particularly among some of the city's most vulnerable students.

IES has also helped develop a new generation of researchers and research organizations that are equipped to meet those high standards of evidence. More than 25 universities are now attracting the nation's best and brightest to training programs in rigorous education science.

While these young people come from multiple disciplines, they are committed to conducting high-quality education research that will be useful to policymakers and practitioners.

In my view, these transformations have moved education research much closer to the caliber of research conducted for decades through the U.S. Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services and the NIH.

While applauding these important accomplishments, I would also describe IES as a work in progress. There are several areas where the Institute could be improved. First, in some cases, I believe IES has promoted scientific rigor at the expense of policy and practical relevance.

Second, IES has under-invested in building partnerships and lines of communication between researchers and the policymakers and educators who should inform and benefit from its work. Third, I think IES can do more to make its work accessible. My sense is that the original framework established by ESRA allows for advancements in these areas. The key challenge lies in helping the current leadership of IES continue to make strides in each of these directions.

I would like to organize my remarks around four core principles that I believe should guide the further strengthening of IES. I'll call these the four Ps: Preserve scientific rigor; Prioritize relevance for policy and practice; Promote greater use of high quality research; and Prepare for the future. Each of these principles should be seen as reinforcing and complimenting the others.

P1: Preserve the commitment to scientific rigor. Specifically, IES should continue to place a premium on funding research that establishes strong causal connections between specific education policies and practices and student outcomes we care about: most notably, achievement in literacy, math, and the sciences; social development; and college and career readiness.

Prior to ESRA and IES, the federal investment in education research generated reasonably good evidence about the nature of the problems we face in our schools, but yielded weak and unsubstantiated claims about how various approaches may or may not have solved those problems and improved teaching and learning. Even after only 12 years of work under IES, the education research community is finding that many of those claims, both positive and negative, turned out to be plain wrong.

For example, over the past 12 years the federal government allocated hundreds of millions of dollars for academic enhancements to after-school programs, innovative teacher professional development programs, cutting-edge adolescent literacy programs, and computer-based tutoring tools. Many of these investments were guided by compelling theory but, due to the legacy of low quality research in education, the evidence base for their actual effectiveness was weak. Fortunately, Congress and the U.S. Department of Education had the foresight to make sure that these new investments were accompanied by rigorous evaluations under IES to learn about their impact on teaching and learning. Unfortunately, it turned out that most these initiatives, on average, had little or no impact.

In a more encouraging example, many federal, state and local policymakers are currently working to expand pre-kindergarten programs. Due in part to the growing commitment to scientific rigor in education research, these policymakers no longer have to rely on one single study from the 1960s involving less than 120 toddlers who were exposed to an incredibly expensive set of services and supports before they entered school. Evidence from a growing number of credible studies is showing the benefits of affordable early intervention.

Federal support for these kinds of rigorous impact studies is crucial to developing a more effective educational system.

P2: Prioritize rigorous education research that is more relevant to policymakers and practitioners. This challenge has two parts: 1) supporting partnerships and collaboration between researchers, policymakers and practitioners, and 2) ensuring that studies address questions about how and why education practices and policies work or do not work.

**Prioritizing Partnerships:** My organization in New York City, and similar groups in more than a dozen other cities around the country, are beginning to demonstrate the value of partnerships that include researchers, policymakers, administrators, and educators. By working together to set research priorities, interpret results and put findings to use, we are accelerating the pace at which research can inform policy and practice.

For instance, we have worked with the New York City Department of Education to enhance the largest school survey in the nation, which collects vital information from students, parents and teachers; we have produced individual reports for schools involved in our studies, to help them improve in real time; and we have examined the effects of the City's high school choice process on low-achieving students, producing insights that have been useful to both the district and local community groups that are helping students navigate the system. This is a far cry from the typical end product of research, which generally targets academic colleagues and so often sits on our shelves collecting dust. From my perspective, IES is making strides toward promoting this kind of collaboration and should continue to do so.

Similarly, the U.S. Department of Education in general, and IES in particular, should continue to encourage links between federal programmatic funding and IES-directed studies that build solid evidence about the impact of these investments. While IES's independence should remain paramount, I believe a great deal of its struggle to be relevant can be traced to the limited role that other offices in the Department of Education (as well as the Departments of Health and Human Services and Labor) have had in prioritizing the research questions it pursues and to the limited role that IES has played in getting buy-in from those offices.

Until recently, IES has had even less interaction with State and Local Education Authorities, who in the end are the ultimate consumers of the evidence IES produces. This is beginning to change, with new initiatives like IES's Research-Practice Partnership program and the requirement that the Regional Education Laboratories (RELs) conduct their work through what are called "research alliances," which are formal advisory groups comprised of state and local education policymakers and practitioners. I would encourage the continuation and expansion of these efforts.

**Prioritizing How and Why Questions:** In my view, IES's pursuit of scientific rigor has sometimes narrowed the scope of research to focus exclusively on the question "did it work or not?" This obscures the kind of information we desperately need to make education better.

Specifically, I would encourage IES to expand its pursuit of questions about how, why, for whom and under what circumstances things work or do not work. These questions should be essential to rigorous evaluations of program effectiveness and, in my opinion, will be especially valuable when we find something that did not work.

For example, I helped conduct a study of what are called High School Career Academies, a promising school reform initiative that is supposed to prevent students from dropping out and help them enter the workforce after high school. On average, we found that the programs had no effect on dropout rates (although it had large positive effects on workforce outcomes). However, when we dug a little deeper and looked at students who were at the highest risk of dropping out and were enrolled in the most dysfunctional schools, we found quite large dropout reductions.

This was in spite of the fact that the programs in these schools were not very strong; they were just much better than anything else available to those students. We were able to attribute these effects to the program's emphasis on personal relationships and high expectations, particularly in the context of an otherwise chaotic environment. We would not have learned this without expanding the prevue of our research beyond the thumbs up or thumbs down question of "did it work or not." As a result, that study is listed in the What Works Clearinghouse—IES's definitive resource on scientifically validated research in education—as one of only seven with evidence of positive effects on keeping students in high school.

Questions about how and why policies and practices work or do not work are important both in the context of new initiatives and when proven practices are being adapted to new circumstances. In particular, IES should continue its recent investments in what is called "continuous improvement research"—a process by which data collection and analysis are integrated into program development and implementation. While still in its infancy, this seems like a promising method for using rigorous research to help schools become more effective over time.

**P3: Promote wider use and application of education research.** Again, I believe this is a dual challenge: 1) treating dissemination as a continuous process rather than a single event at the end of a study, and 2) making smarter use of technology to organize and provide access to high-quality evidence.

**Promoting Dissemination as a Continuous Process:** In my experience, this also ties back to the importance of building relationships between researchers and the audiences we are trying to reach. For example, the Career Academies study I mentioned earlier was a 15-year evaluation (yes, 15 years). This work, involving literally hundreds of contributors and collaborators, has had a profound influence on career and technical education. While the study found that the Career Academies produced sustained positive effects for on long term workforce outcomes for young people, the story of the study's influence began before we collected a single piece of data. My colleagues and I at MDRC started this project by asking both leaders in the field and teachers and administrators in schools what they thought would be worth learning about innovative approaches to the school-to-work transition. We continued this dialog at each step in the study providing a wide range of audiences with early and long-term findings and asking for their guidance about how our work could be more useful. As a result, key stakeholders bought into the research process from its inception; they were able to confront the results, even though not all of them were positive; and, most importantly, they continue to this day to work diligently to reform and strengthen their programs to be better aligned with what we found made a difference.

**Prioritizing Smarter Use of Technology:** IES has led the effort to bring dissemination of high-quality education research into the late 20th Century (although probably not the 21st Century) through its creation of the What Works Clearinghouse—a compendium of studies that have been screened for scientific merit and catalogued by topic. It has also supported related resources like the Better Evidence Encyclopedia and the Society for Research on Educational

Effectiveness. More recently, IES has issued a call for the establishment of a Center on Knowledge Utilization, whose mission will be to study how educators and policymakers use research. I believe these are investments worth sustaining and increasing, particularly if they continue their development of research-based practice guides in addition to their mandate to serve as arbiters of what constitutes scientifically valid evidence.

However, to advance the use of rigorous research, I think IES will need to make smarter use of technology to make this work more accessible and user-friendly. I do not think this is a matter of keeping better track of how many reports get published or how many website visits they receive. This is beyond my area of expertise, but I am struck by the ease with which I can find pretty useful and generally reliable information about restaurant and movie reviews, and ratings of cars and appliances. I am hard pressed to believe that those of us who care about making high-quality research more widely available do not have something to learn from these efforts.

**P4:** Prepare a next generation of education researchers who are committed to scientific rigor, to relevance for policy and practice, and to applying what they learn in the field. This may be the most important legacy of ESRA and IES.

Hundreds of talented young people have completed or are enrolled in training programs supported by IES that place a special emphasis on teaching about scientific research methods. I have had the privilege of working directly with nearly a dozen of these young scholars, including six who are now students at NYU's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development. I have been impressed by their competence, certainly, but mostly by their passion for making a difference in schools. None of these folks will see themselves as being successful if their primary accomplishments are to accumulate a long list of articles in prestigious journals and receive tenure at a prominent university. While many of them are certainly destined for these accomplishments, I am convinced that they will make their biggest impact in producing high-quality work that education policymakers and practitioners value and use.

From that perspective, I believe IES's support for pre- and post-doctoral training programs and for its methodological and professional development activities are critical investments. I particularly applaud IES's recent call for universities to form partnerships with schools and school districts as key components of their doctoral training programs and to ensure the graduate students spend time working closely with administrators and teachers to learn about their needs and interests.

In closing, I think we must recognize that despite the great leap forward precipitated by ESRA and IES, the reality is that most states and school districts still use rigorous research in policy and administrative decisions much too infrequently. This is, in part, about the role that ideology and politics play (both constructively and disruptively), but it is also because the policy and practitioner communities not been very involved in the production of evidence and setting of research priorities. There is still very limited evidence on issues that matter to them; the evidence that does exist is often hard to understand and apply; and there is little incentive for

them to produce or use rigorous evidence. The recommendations I am offering here would go a long way toward addressing these issues and would help make schools and school districts more active partners in education research.

Of course, there are more than 14,000 jurisdictions that make policy and administer K-12 education in the US. The role of the federal government is limited at best (with only 7 percent of education expenditures covered by federal funding and limited capacity to manage implementation). It seems imperative that a not-insignificant portion of this limited federal investment be accompanied by two requirements—similar to those we've seen in the Investing in Innovation Fund: 1) that SEAs and LEAs use federal resources to support initiatives that have credible evidence of their effectiveness, and 2) when such evidence is lacking, that they be willing to participate in rigorous research that will help fill this gap. Together with the four Ps I have proposed, over time, this approach could help our nation build a firmer foundation of evidence and ultimately produce better outcomes for our students and teachers.

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Mr. ROKITA [presiding]. Thank you, Doctor.  
Ms. Christie, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF KATHY CHRISTIE, VICE PRESIDENT, KNOWLEDGE/INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND DISSEMINATION, EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES**

Ms. CHRISTIE. The Education Commission of the States, or ECS, was created by states, for states nearly 50 years ago. We help states learn what other states are doing, what new ideas are emerging, and what the research says.

We provide unbiased information. We don't advocate for certain education policies. And we don't pick sides.

We are the only state-focused national organization that works across all levels and sectors of education, from pre-K to post-secondary, and across branches of government.

The strength of the evidence underpinning policy levers and initiatives is critical to the success of the policy process, but policy-makers seldom know what the evidence says on every issue. Much depends on the quality of their staff and whether they know where to go to find an evidence base. And yet, they have to make decisions every day, whether they can answer these questions or not.

That is why having timely, succinct, and understandable research available is so important and why organizations like ECS play such a vital role.

My role at ECS lets me sit in a national crow's nest, watching the horizon for the education problems states are struggling with and for what they are doing to solve these problems. But it is difficult to make sure that every education committee chair, governor's advisor, state superintendent, governing board member, and higher education entity knows about our resources. We very much understand the difficulties of getting good research into the hands of those who can do something about it.

The Institute for Education Sciences has some entities available to attempt to address some of these needs, including regional education laboratories, commonly known as RELs, comprehensive centers, and content centers. In the past the production from RELs and centers seemed uneven. Resources seemed to take a long time to come to fruition, and by the time they did sometimes the window of opportunity to inform decisions had passed, and decision-makers were not always at the table to set the agenda.

Today the What Works Clearinghouse is building a strong base of easily accessible program reviews and pointing toward interventions that work and that don't work. Summaries are now less academic and easier to follow. Practice guides provide good direction. Conclusions are presented in a more straightforward manner. Readers can actually easily access areas by topic.

Conclusions, I am sorry. IES might consider how to more clearly distinguish between findings regarding whether studies meet standards of evidence and whether programs actually impact learning. Overall, however, the site has improved greatly. We link to the clearinghouse by issue area, which is an efficient way to immediately capture updates for our constituents.

In addition, content centers on issues of importance to states, such as turnarounds and state capacity, can be spot on for meeting state needs. But IES could work to ensure that vetting and review for activities and outputs does not inhibit the development of timely, relevant, digestible research and assistance.

The Best Evidence Encyclopedia, which has funding ties to IES, is another excellent resource. And my understanding of the new breed of RELs is that they are working to establish research alliances across those states with state leaders at the table.

To put these entities in perspective, though, I would like to highlight what is good about one of my favorite sources, the National Bureau for Economic Research. Nearly every week I get a message highlighting several of their new studies.

These studies are relevant to the problems I see states struggling with, such as compulsory attendance. They are timely; they are prolific. IES could look to this model for improving relevance and timeliness.

Like most academic studies, these are so academic that people are not going to read them, and for the most part they are not openly accessible. So ECS is working to translate studies like this and capture the key findings and recommendations in our research studies database. We organize them by frequently asked questions such as, "Preschool: How prepared do teachers need to be?"

Since 2008 we have entered 193. We are very thankful for the GE Foundation for supporting this work.

The reason for this effort is clear: When busy people ask, "What does the research say?" any response to that question needs to be timely, relevant, digestible, and trusted.

Here are the four final points I would like to make.

One: Research matters not only to those implementers in the field—the superintendents, principals, and teachers—but to those who are committed to improving the system of education.

Two: The gold standard matters, but while optimal, it is not always possible. The real world will continue to demand that policies be crafted based on hypotheses that are relatively well supported by evidence or whether early evidence is simply promising. IES could do a better job of ensuring that topics fit with what matters to states and that its research helps answer not only which programs work but also which policies or state investments hold promise and which elements of those policies matter most so that state-level elected officials might act on them.

Three: IES needs state leaders to perceive it as an unbiased, honest broker, so increasing the independence of IES could be key.

And four: IES should consider a coordinated effort to transparently evaluate and hold itself accountable on a set of performance measures that are important to states.

Thank you for letting me be here.

[The statement of Ms. Christie follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Kathy Christie, Vice President, Knowledge/Information Management & Dissemination, Education Commission of the States**

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE: My name is Kathy Christie. I am Vice President, Knowledge/Information Management & Dissemination for the Education Commission of the States (ECS). The Education Commission of the States (ECS) was created by states, for states, almost 50 years ago.

Since 1965, ECS has worked with state policymakers to improve America's public P-20 education system. We provide unbiased knowledgeable advice to state leaders and help them to learn from one another's experiences. What makes ECS unique in the crowded education policy arena is that we work with policymakers, researchers, thought leaders and practitioners across all levels and sectors of education—from pre-K to postsecondary—and across branches of government. We are the only state-focused national organization that brings together governors, state legislators, chief state school officers, higher education officials, and business leaders to advance policies that improve our educational system. To accomplish this work, we undertake the following kinds of activities:

- We help states learn what other states are doing, identify best practices, what new ideas in education are emerging, and what the research says.
- We provide unbiased information. We don't advocate for certain education policies and we don't pick sides.
- Our website is one of the best in the country to find information on hundreds of education issues. You can check out our website or call us directly; either way, we will provide the information that's needed.

Most people are not aware that it was ECS—the only nationwide interstate compact for education—which was responsible for the creation of NAEP, the National Assessment of Educational Progress. It is this kind of state collaboration and state insight that makes ECS unique. The message I bring here today is about the power of state-level leaders to make a difference in the educational opportunities available to children.

*State Leaders Influence System-Level Reforms*

Policymakers at every level in states—chief state school officers, governing board members, legislators, and governors—all have a role to play in developing and implementing education initiatives. Very often these various policy actors have different opinions about how laws should be shaped. Consequently, evidence related to the hypotheses that underpin state-level policies and evidence on the relative effectiveness of state-level initiatives are critical to the success of the policy process.

They hope, and we do too, that the decisions they make will drive improvements in what can be a large, bureaucratic system. A constituent of ours once described the education system as a big pillow. You punch it—and make a big dent, but gradually that dent disappears and the pillow puffs out to its original shape. You punch it again, making another dent. But after a bit the pillow again puffs back out to its original shape. We all understand how tough it is to make real change.

State-level policymakers seldom know what the evidence says on every issue. Much depends on the quality of their staff and whether they know where to go to find an evidence base. Even when they have capable staff with sufficient time, it can be a challenge to gather and prepare evidence in a way that allows policymakers to quickly understand whether it is sufficiently robust to support the decision they will make.

When considering a hypothesis behind a bill, legislators routinely ask: What is the level of evidence supporting this proposal? Is it minimal, with a higher risk to success? Is there some evidence available, but it fails to highlight the most critical factors that need to be in the policy? Or is there extensive preliminary research and piloting, with interventions that have been aligned at all levels and across agencies—a sufficiently robust knowledge base on which to guide large-scale decisions?

And yet state legislators have to make decisions every day—whether they can answer these questions or not. That's why having timely, succinct and understandable

research available is so important and why organizations like ECS play a vital role in state-level education policy.

#### *National Perspective*

My role at the Education Commission of the States lets me sit in a national crows' nest, watching the horizon—across state boundaries—for the education problems states are struggling with and for what they are doing to solve those problems. ECS scans news clippings every day and pushes the most relevant out via email—every day. We track the policies that state legislators are enacting, and we add them every week to the most extensive, freely-available database of its kind in the country. Every day we are culling from the professional and academic literature and pushing the best back out via our web site. But it is difficult to make sure that every chair of an education committee, every governor's education policy advisor, every state superintendent, every state board member and every higher education agency head knows about those resources. We very much understand the difficulties of getting good research into the hands of those who can do something about it. And these challenges don't even begin to touch the difficulty of reaching every legislator and agency head and governing board member across the country.

What I have learned in over 20 years with ECS is that we reinvent the wheel time and time again. Policymakers don't pay enough attention to history. We might read the research and go, "oh, yeah, that's right" but then we too often jump at some new shiny, glittery answer or lobby for a new research study rather than taking time to unearth the root cause of a problem or step back to analyze the existing research—the research that while there, might not be broadly available or is so incomprehensible, we don't know what to make of it.

The Institute of Education Sciences has some entities available to attempt to address some of these needs, including Regional Education Laboratories (commonly known as RELs), comprehensive centers, and content centers. Past RELS seemed uneven in production of resources, particularly those that might remain relevant and useful long after individual instances of technical assistance or convenings. Resource development or projects seemed to take a long time to come to fruition, and by the time they did, sometimes the window of opportunity to inform decisions had passed. And decision-makers were not always at the table to set the agenda.

Today the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) is building a strong base of accessible program reviews and pointing toward interventions that work—and that don't work. WWC has improved over time. Summaries are now less academic and easier to follow. Practice guides provide good direction for practitioners. Conclusions are presented in a more straightforward manner. Readers can easily access areas related to specific topics. IES might consider how to more clearly distinguish between 1) findings regarding whether studies meet standards of evidence and 2) evaluations of actual program effects on learning. Overall, however, the site has improved greatly. ECS is able to link to WWC issue areas via relevant topic areas (e.g., literacy) on [www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org), so as studies are added to WWC, it is not necessary for us to add each new review to our site. This is efficient and immediately captures updates for our constituents.

Content centers that focus on topics that matter to states—turnarounds and state capacity, for example—can be spot on for meeting state needs. IES might review processes to ensure that vetting and review processes for activities and outputs of these new centers and for the new RELs does not inhibit the development of timely, relevant, digestible research and assistance.

The Best Evidence Encyclopedia is another excellent resource: a free web site created by the Johns Hopkins University School of Education's Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education (CDDRE) under funding from the Institute of Education Sciences. And my understanding of the new breed of Regional Education Labs (RELs) is that they are working to determine what states need and helping to establish research alliances across those states—with state leaders at the table. But like many education policy organizations, including ECS, RELs may struggle to raise awareness of available resources and how they can support their states and school districts.

From my crows' nest, I seek out and cull research reports from the comprehensive centers and the content centers—although some are more prolific than others.

To put this comment in perspective, I'd like to highlight what's good about one of my favorite entities—the National Bureau for Economic Research. Every week I get an email summarizing the education studies they have completed. Every week. Not four per year. Not one per month. Every week. They're called Working Papers, so one's immediate assumption is that they are food for thought—not to be considered definitive, but findings to think about. Why are they so compelling? They are relevant to the problems I see states struggling with—like compulsory attendance,

for instance. Does the age at which kids start school matter? Does the cut-off age (5 by September 1, for example) for attendance matter? Does the upper compulsory attendance age make a difference over the course of a lifetime? NBER studies are relevant and timely. They look at the types of issues that governors and state legislatures can influence via policy. They are prolific producers of what most would agree is quality research.

These studies are dense. Their titles are often just abysmal and if they were movies, no one would buy tickets (e.g. *Interpreting the Evidence on Life Cycle Skill Formation*), even though they have much to offer. They are so academic that most state policymakers—or their excellent staff—are not going to read them. The same goes for studies coming out of AERA. And for the most part, the studies are not openly accessible. But they have something to say to you. And to state legislators. And to governors. So ECS is working to translate studies like this and capture the key findings, recommendations, and implications for policy in its Research Studies Database. We organize them by frequently asked questions such as “Preschool: How prepared do teachers need to be?” or “High school curriculum: How important is rigor?” Since 2008, we have entered key findings and policy implications from 193 studies into The ECS Research Studies Database. We are very thankful to the GE Foundation for supporting this work.

The database could be easier to use. It could be “prettier.” We have created standards for inclusion, and an important standard is that studies need to have appeared in peer-reviewed journals. But we do make exceptions.

For example, I personally mined *Crossing the Finish Line*—a 2009 book by William Bowen, Matthew Chingos and Michael McPherson—names probably familiar to many in this room—that looked at what impacts student persistence and success across postsecondary institutions. Compelling, compelling statements built from statistical analyses are buried throughout, but they were most certainly read by more academics and higher education leaders than by policymakers. The authors’ analysis supports, for example, the clearly articulated statement that “both parental education and family income are strongly associated with graduation rates even after controlling for related differences in student characteristics, particularly academic preparation. However, family income, not parental education, is primarily responsible for the overall relationship between SES and time-to-degree.”

If another credible, vetted resource emerges to counter such findings, ECS will not hesitate to include it in the database as well.

As exceptions to the peer-review rule, we include NBER studies, many of which eventually are published in peer-reviewed journals—but in the interim, they reflect the food for thought that state leaders need.

Do enough state leaders know about this resource? No. Have we been successful in marketing it? Probably not. We always include new studies in our weekly e-newsletter, e-Connection, and they always get the most hits; regrettably, we have not been particularly successful in marketing its availability.

The reason we acted, though, is clear. When a consistent element of questions is “what does the research say?” the response needs to be timely, relevant, digestible, and trusted.

Here are the four final points I would like to make:

1. Research matters not only to those implementers in the field—the superintendents, principals and teachers—but to those who are committed to improving the system of education.

2. The gold standard matters. But while optimal, it is not always possible. The real world will continue to demand that policies be crafted based on hypotheses that are “relatively well” supported by evidence or where the early evidence is “promising.” IES could do a better job of ensuring 1) that topics fit with what matters in states; 2) that its research helps answer not only “which programs work” but also which policies or state investments hold promise—and which elements of those policies matter most so that elected officials might act on them.

3. IES needs state leaders to perceive it as an unbiased, honest broker, so increasing the independence of IES could be key.

4. In that regard, IES might want to consider a coordinated effort to transparently evaluate and hold itself accountable on a set of performance measures that are important to states.

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Mr. ROKITA. Thank you, Ms. Christie.

Thank the witnesses for their testimony.

I now would like to recognize Chairman Walden, Walberg for 5 minutes.



Mr. WALBERG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Put a W in front of it and we are always at the end, so we all look the same. Thank you.

Appreciate the panel being here today, and in the process of doing a lot of reauthorization of laws that are in place, agencies that are in place, the question continues to come to my mind of why.

Ms. CHRISTIE, should reauthorization of Education Science Reform Act take place?

Ms. CHRISTIE. I think IES is an incredible resource. Like all of us, it can get a lot better.

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Scott, I would ask you the same question. From your perspective with GAO, should reauthorization of the Education Science Reform Act—of course that is very pertinent to IES—take place?

Mr. SCOTT. Well, I think as our work demonstrates, IES has played a significant role in improving the quality and the rigor of education research, and given the number of efforts that are currently underway to reform the U.S.'s educational system, it is critically important that we continue to have some vehicle such as IES to ensure that the various programs that are underway can be properly evaluated.

Mr. WALBERG. Ms. Christie, is it the responsibility of the federal government to do this research, or could it be done equally as well—maybe more efficiently—at the private sector level and, in fact, at the states in competition for educational quality, promoting research entities that would definitely be looking at states and their responsibility for education?

Ms. CHRISTIE. We love to highlight states that in every bill put in an evaluation component to—so that they are modeling continuous improvement to their constituents, their schools, their districts. Many times it is the cost component of that that is difficult, and there are other times when if there are common problems across the states—and there are; they are nearly all common even though we all would like to think we are absolutely unique—but when you have common problems that is the power of ECS. You do things as a collaborative. You do things that keep the scale within reach.

And I think the federal level has always had a role in keeping the spotlight on equity and ensuring all kids have opportunities, and I think that there are certain things that are probably fitting for both to do.

Mr. WALBERG. I guess my concern comes back that also on the federal level bureaucracies develop that take \$600 million of resources that certainly could be effective at a private sector entity, looking for best practices with those unique students we have. And yet, as you I think accurately state, with their uniqueness there is a great deal of sameness as well, that parents, local school boards, school districts, superintendents, teachers want to achieve in the outcome of students.

And I guess I am not hearing, as of yet, a strength in the answer that this could not be done in somewhat a market-based approach at the local level—of states specifically—of doing the research that is necessary with best practices that are out there and a clear understanding that we need to achieve those and how do we do that.

So respond to that, Ms. Christie, if you would, please?

Ms. CHRISTIE. The big component here is trust. So if you have a lot of private sector folks doing research, which even right now, I mean, when IES contracts with REL providers, those are basically private contractors.

There needs to be a sense that what is coming out is unbiased and that it can be trusted. And I worry that if that gets outside of an independently verified group that you could lose that trust, and I think that would be a huge gap, then, in the research.

Mr. WALBERG. Well, Mr. Chairman, I would yield back my time after saying that if we are talking about trust in context with the federal government and independence in context with the federal government we have a major hurdle to get over.

I yield back.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the gentleman.

Ranking Member Miller is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MILLER. Thank you very much.

Sounds like there is a considerable amount of trust here at this table in this process, with some suggestions for improvement—but not eradicating the concept that IES has been put here.

Dr. Kemple, you—I think the panel seems to agree that we are doing pretty well on the rigor side here. The questions is about how do you get that dissemination to take place that is actually useful at the state level or even at the district school level.

And that has always been a problem for me. I would say before we got into this process, what we had was a landscape littered with 5-year pilot projects that just died and nobody ever asked what happened to them or did it work or not, and then somebody came along over and over and over again, very often with the same pilot project just in a different state, different district around here.

So how are we doing on this dissemination in terms of following through on it—not just getting it there, but then what is done to help people if the state decides they want to go through it? I mean, we are sort of going through this with Common Core. Our governor just put up \$1 billion to help the districts with the implementation. I mean, this is a big hurdle in terms of taking new findings of rigorous research and suggesting to people, “This may be a better way to do something than you have been doing for 15 years the other way.”

How are we doing on that hurdle?

Mr. KEMPLE. I think this is a two-fold problem. I think it starts with thinking about dissemination and promoting the use of research as a process rather than as an event. Too often we place much too much emphasis on waiting until the study is done until we actually think about what we have been able learn from that.

I think, A, it is important to think about dissemination as it is starting before even one iota of data is collected to make sure we are asking the right questions; I think it is important that we incorporate the policymakers and the expertise and the practitioners who are part of the formation of the research projects or the evidence-building process in a continuous way throughout a project so that we are feeding the information that we are learning in process into a decision-making process and into a learning process.

And I think thirdly, it is important to make sure that as we package results, that as we put results together, we are translating those into practice guides so that we are being led by the best evidence possible in a way that is actionable and that makes the practitioner community—or puts the practitioner community in a position to learn from both the work in progress and the work at its conclusion.

Mr. MILLER. Dr. Long, this is your field. How is it going?

Ms. LONG. I would say that IES is doing a wonderful job in terms of production and leveraging the field to produce the research. I think the dissemination part of it is a work in progress.

And actually, as the board and IES have talked about it much more in terms of communication, which is a two-way street between IES, the work that is produced, and what is known with the field and what the field needs in order to do better work.

Part of what is involved with that is translation—taking very rigorous research, which education has gone forward tremendously in having causal results, but translating that for the layperson, for the teacher who is in the classroom so they know how to use it, and then learning how to disseminate it.

IES needs to do more—

Mr. MILLER. Ms. Christie, is that your job? At that stage is that your job, the handoff here to the states?

Ms. CHRISTIE. We hand off everything we can get our hands on to the states, yes—

Mr. MILLER. No, but I am just asking, you know, you get this new research, you get a model for dissemination or to the importance of this research, and I just want to—so where do the states pick this up and make a decision?

Ms. CHRISTIE. Yes, we—

Mr. MILLER. Not all research is welcome, you know, I find from time to time in the education establishment because it suggests substantial change—significant change. So how do the governors pave the way when you have rigorous research that suggests you have got to change directions? I mean, we are now, what, 2 years into the Common Core with governors modifying and rethinking the model back and forth to where we are today.

Ms. CHRISTIE. Well, if I could make one suggestion, so much of what is in the What Works Clearinghouse, for example, is about the programs, not necessarily about those big policy issues that a governor needs to take up.

But I think research is welcome, it just needs to be crafted in a way that folks like me—I mean, I am just a translator; I am not an academic—that I can understand and then I can put into practice.

Mr. MILLER. Well, Mr. Kemple, how do we get the feedback loop back to the researchers and the disseminators at IES based upon what you have learned in modification? Because if you look at teacher sites, teachers are always modifying somebody else's lesson plans, somebody else's approach, and it is rather an interesting process. How do you get what you are doing in New York back to the IES and others about how this is going?—

Mr. KEMPLE. Well, I think just in the way that a teacher collaborative, as you mentioned, works, as someone is learning from—tak-

ing what one teacher has done and they are building from another, those folks are all at the table together talking both about what their goals and objectives are, what kinds of problems they are facing in the classroom, and what kinds of different solutions they have each come up with on their own. Again, I think this is a process of making sure that all of those folks are somehow at the table as we discuss the nature of the problems that we face, the solutions we have each come up with, and then cycling that back into an effort at continuous improvement.

Mr. MILLER. Thank you.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the ranking member.

Mr. Tierney is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you.

Thank the witnesses for their testimony. This, I think, follows along with Mr. Miller's questions a little bit, and it may—I think it is a fair question to ask. Can any of you tell me about a program or practice that was actually affected by the research—one that was either scaled up or eliminated or changed in some way?

Mr. KEMPLE. Sure. I was privileged to lead a study of what are called high school career academies, which are high school reform initiatives aimed at dropout prevention and helping young people make healthy transitions into the workforce and to college. This is a 15-year study—yes, 15 years. So if we had waited 15 years for this to translate into some change in practice I think we would probably have lost any momentum or chance of making a difference.

But this was an initiative that found little or no impact on college readiness, although many of the young people in the study went on to college, but found massive effects on their capacity to find good jobs, keep good jobs, and climb a career ladder in the 8 years following high school graduation. We were able to form a coalition of stakeholders in school districts, at the state level, and among expert organizations across the country that were part of helping us form that research project and part of the process that we used to disseminate what we were learning over the course of the 15-year study, so that by the time we got toward the end of that project many of those groups had already begun to synthesize the work into the creation of organizations that were aimed at supporting the standards for implementing—for creating and sustaining these career academy programs and for a continuous improvement process to work on some of the weaker aspects, such as the academic curriculum and the college access programs.

Mr. TIERNEY. So 15 years—that is before the 2002—

Mr. KEMPLE. That is right.

Mr. TIERNEY [continuing]. Authorization of this act. So was that done under this act or something else?

Mr. KEMPLE. That was actually done independently through private funding.

Mr. TIERNEY. Okay. Well, my question to you is can you give me an example of something that occurred under this act that either changed in some way a program or a practice—

Ms. CHRISTIE. Dr. Long?

Ms. LONG. Yes. I can speak about some of my own work that was supported by IES.

Mr. TIERNEY. Please.

Ms. LONG. Working with two of my colleagues, Eric Bettinger and Phil Oreopoulos, we worked with tax preparers to help families fill out their student financial aid forms, the FAFSA. And so after completing their taxes we only needed 5 additional minutes to pre-populate the FAFSA using software and then asking them a few additional questions as well as giving them information about college prices and what they needed to do in order to access those institutions. We found huge results in this randomized controlled design of getting many more students into college by just offering 5 minutes of assistance.

This report was first released in 2009, right around the debates about FAFSA simplification, was it worthwhile, and we have subsequently gotten an additional grant from IES to continue to see how we can expand these kinds of services and community tax sites around the country.

Mr. TIERNEY. And did the FAFSA reforms in any way play off of those findings, and did they—

Ms. LONG. We certainly fed that information into the debates and received many calls from both states as well as many members of Congress around the federal government to understand that, yes, information is a huge barrier. This was a randomized controlled trial, simplifying things and giving assistance, and it turned out it was very cost effective.

Mr. TIERNEY. Dr. Scott, or Mr. Scott, do you find enough of those examples in your work, in your review of this agency to continue to warrant its continuation?

Mr. SCOTT. I think, as we noted in my statement, IES is uniquely positioned to act in this area. I think it is important, though, that as we also pointed out, that they take some steps to improve. For example, in the areas of continuing to get feedback from practitioners and policymakers, continuing to hold various aspects of their operations accountable, such as the RELs, and then continuing to measure and report out on their activities. So I think IES is uniquely positioned to contribute in this area but there also needs to be some improvements to their operations and accountability.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you.

Do practitioners—do actual teachers and superintendents and principals—have a way of connecting with IES and looking at these reviews periodically and interacting? Is there some setup to encourage that?

Ms. LONG. There are several efforts. There is information that is available online. There are constant efforts to translate and make this information available. For example, the practice guides have been cited, which really break down the research to what teachers can do in their classrooms.

But this is a work in progress. Much more needs to happen, and IES is taking steps to get more feedback from the field about what they need and how they need to use that information.

Mr. TIERNEY. And are you working with colleges that teach people to become teachers as to how they might access a tool like this and make it part of their overall practice as they go out and teach?

Ms. LONG. That is one of the audiences, but much more could be done with them.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the gentleman.

Ms. Bonamici is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BONAMICI. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to the witnesses for being here today for this discussion. I, especially as a member of this committee, truly believe that education is an investment in our country's future and so it is important for us to get the policy right here.

And, Ms. Christie, I want to say that as a former state legislator, thank you. Frequently relied on the Education Commission of the States and your work there.

I especially appreciate your pointing out in your written testimony that you have learned over the years that we tend to reinvent the wheel, and also pointing out that it is important to take the time to really unearth the root cause of a problem, and I hope that this hearing today will help with both of those areas—help us not reinvent the wheel, but also not neglect the importance of looking at the root cause of the problem. And I have often spoken about the importance of, for example, looking at poverty and homelessness and how that affects students in school.

So I wanted to talk a little bit about what many of you have mentioned both in your written and oral testimony, and that is the relevance of research. So I am from Oregon, and we have the Oregon Leadership Network Research Alliance, which is under our Education Northwest, and they have really been working to bring together the practitioners on the ground with the policymakers, understanding that the research needs to be accessible to both of these groups, and I agree.

So I would like to talk a little bit about what relevance means.

And, Dr. Kemple, you said that many states and school districts don't use rigorous evidence because they have not been involved in producing or guiding what research is done. So you also mentioned that it is important to prioritize educational research that is relevant to policymakers and practitioners.

So can you all talk a little bit about what does relevant mean and who is determining relevancy? So are the practitioners and the policymakers all saying that the same things are relevant? And how do their views differ?

And then who ultimately makes that decision? If we are saying we want relevant research, who is going to make that decision? Is that going to be us in—as policymakers, is it going to be the practitioners, or is it going to be the researchers, and why?

Mr. KEMPLE. So briefly, I think relevance means two things. One, I think it means, whose questions are we asking as researchers or how do we—whose questions are we prioritizing as researchers? I think that is a two-way conversation. I think it has to include people who are the ultimate consumers of their research. If it is a question for Congress about whether they would like to make sure that an investment in early childhood education, adolescent literacy, afterschool programming is paying off in terms of improving—achieving the goals that it was set out to, either improving

teaching or improving learning among young people, we ought to know that those are priorities for what gets learned and that conversation needs to happen between the people who are making the tough decisions about how to allocate scarce resources for the benefit of children.

Secondly, though, I think it means that we have to place a higher priority on the questions about why and how and under what conditions are investments in education improvement make a difference or don't make a difference. In my view, it is just as important to find out something doesn't work as it is to find out that it doesn't work—or that it does work, and—but going beyond the thumbs up, thumbs down to say, “Why did this work? What were the causal mechanisms? What was the appropriate context?” Those are the things that will matter most and translate well enough in Oregon as well as New York State or Arizona or Texas.

Ms. BONAMICI. Thank you.

And from the other witnesses, do you want to give me some input on how those determinations are made about what research is done? How is it determined that it is relevant? And how can we better improve those—that communication between the practitioners and the policymakers and the researchers?

Ms. LONG. I think the importance of partnerships cannot be underscored enough. And this is a movement that IES is going towards, that there has to be a feedback mechanism where you are doing research in partnership with the field, with the teachers, the schools, the universities, so that as you learn as you go along and it is a continual improvement type of model. Because what is relevant can also change very quickly.

At the same time, you need a federal organization that is going to be objective and look at the national good and say, “This is what is important for the country. This is the information that we all need to know.” And some of the myths that we have had before, we need to realize those don't work and other things do, while also feeding that information to people who are making decisions—the policymakers—to understand, given our limited resources, we have to make decisions, we have to prioritize. So that is also very important and relevant.

Ms. BONAMICI. Thank you.

Ms. Christie?

Ms. CHRISTIE. Sure. I would like to push on a little bit different way that might not have been talked about in the past.

There are groups like ECS and the National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governors Association, Council of Chief State School Officers, the state boards organization, that if someone reached out to all of us we could weigh in on what we hear from the states. I mean, I watch every day e-clips across the country, we have a policy database that even someone at ECS could put together a team and sit down and actually look at what are the policies that are being enacted and what are states struggling with? Because they are like the tip of the iceberg for what people need to know.

Ms. BONAMICI. Thank you.

I see my time is expired. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROKITA. Thank the gentlelady.

Ms. Foxx is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to thank our panel for being here today.

And I want to say, I want to associate myself with the train of questioning that Mr. Miller was going at before, I believe, and other folks, in terms of the way we are looking at this issue, and particularly in the way of application. That old saying about *deja vu* all over again, I have been in this business for a long time and this panel—we could be in a time warp here, actually, because I believe I first heard this kind of debate and this kind of discussion back in the 1960s and maybe 1970s and 1980s when I was on the school board, when I did my master's degree.

We have been dealing with this issue forever in terms of how do we get the research—how do we get the knowledge that we have applied appropriately in the places where it can do the most good? And it seems as though we haven't figured that out yet.

I mean, people have been decrying the fact that folks in education just ignore the research and the results.

So what I would like to ask each one of you is do you have some examples of where you have seen the research that we—of programs that work well, methods that work well—where has it been applied well, appropriately, and how do we replicate those situations without it costing a lot of money?

Anybody?

Mr. KEMPLE. I guess one example I would point to for now is—and highlight the fact that I think one thing that really does differentiate us now from the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and even 1990s is that what was not on the table then was whether we had evidence we could really believe. I think by and large we were making big investments in research that really didn't provide us with any causal link between the programs and policies that were being paid for and the outcomes that we cared about for the young people in the schools.

I think one—what we are starting to see—and among those things were teacher preparation. I think what we see is a long litany of research that suggests that it doesn't matter how much—where people were trained, what their test scores were coming out of graduate schools of education, and whether, in fact, they had a master's degree. What mattered most was their experience in the classroom and the way that they were mastering their subject matter material.

We now have some pretty solid evidence that some alternative routes to certification or entry into teaching are turning out to be as if not more effective than traditional routes through schools of education. I think we are starting to see a proliferation of strategies to draw in talented people from across the country to opt for teaching as opposed to other highly prestigious occupations, and some of that is growing out of the research that suggests that initiatives like Teach for America or the New Teacher Project are producing positive gains for young people in classrooms.

Ms. LONG. To build from that, even today there is the release of a report looking at alternative certification programs that is being released that was partly funded by IES, and it has completely changed the way people discuss what is a high quality teacher.



Many of the old models that we have been using for years of just get a master's degree have been called into question and because of the data that IES collects we know that the way that teachers are distributed across schools varies incredibly. Where there are high-need schools with students that are suffering, we have to figure out policies of how to get teachers there.

I think the other thing IES has definitely changed is the way that people are trained to do education research and who is attracted to do education research. You now see in graduate schools of education people who used to be former teachers, who worked in community-based organizations, who now, combined with all of these rigorous tools, are doing research in a very different way than they did in the past.

The other thing that is very different now is technology, and this is something that IES is grappling with: How can you use technology to communicate and get feedback from the field? And that is everything from building a Web site, which is certainly not enough, to podcasts and other kinds of uses of technology, and we have seen several examples—everything from how they are communicating with teachers to parents to trying to distill some of this information so that they can use it.

Ms. CHRISTIE. Can I weigh in?

The early literacy and the early learning research I think has had a dramatic effect. The problem is I graduated with a teaching degree in 1970, and at that time I knew that the first three years of a child's life were the most important ones, and that is why later in my career I decided to stay home with my kids for 12 years.

So you are absolutely right about the recycle. And ECS had a huge early learning initiative in the 1970s, so we have known. The trick is, exactly, why do we keep moving on to the next easier thing to do than getting back to what we need to do, how do we push that back out, how do we make sure we are actually making progress? And those are the really tough questions, I believe.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the gentlelady.

Ms. FOXX. Can I indulge for 10 seconds?

Anybody who comes in this room who is in the education business and uses the word training will get my lecture. We train animals and we educate people. So those of you who are in the business of education, I would ask you to not talk about training but talk about education.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the gentlelady.

Mr. SCOTT is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCOTT OF VIRGINIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I have some of the same questions that the ranking member had about what you actually do with the information. For example, I notice that the What Works Clearinghouse studied many dropout prevention programs. Exactly what do we know about dropping out and what can be done about it on a local level?

Ms. CHRISTIE. Can I jump in?

Mr. SCOTT OF VIRGINIA. Sure.

Ms. CHRISTIE. I think the data that is some of what IES is funding—for example, with early warning indicators and that sort of thing—is a tremendous leap forward, and I think states are paying a great deal of attention to that, trying to figure out how to even

get those early warning indicators down into the very early grades to identify kids very early on.

The interventions that are in the What Works Clearinghouse on trying to prevent kids from dropping out of school, I think there is the kind of information there that people can get their arms around.

I have to tell you that at the state level we moved offices several years ago and we had box after box after box of state dropout initiatives. There was not one piece of evidence tied or—in any of those boxes. Nothing had been evaluated.

So it is just so critically important, and it doesn't always get done.

Ms. LONG. I think the goals of the What Works Clearinghouse are very admirable. Education is a very crowded space and there are many opinions and there are many organizations that are releasing different reports.

And because much of the research is very complex, the average person oftentimes cannot understand it and so IES has stepped in as a federal role to say, "We will be an objective, unbiased source. We will help to translate what all this complex work means."

And that is where the What Works Clearinghouse steps in, looking at studies to say, "People are making these grand statements. Can you actually believe these results?"

To walk away and say, "This program does or does not work." Knowing that it does not work is also very important.

But the What Works Clearinghouse, I would say, has many opportunities for improvement in how it interacts with the field, from the way it does its studies to making sure that people in the field know that it exists. There have been recent changes even to its Web site so that when someone goes it is organized in terms of frequently asked questions—I want to know about how to help my preschooler—and starting to organize and revamp the site in that way.

So it is definitely an area of continuous improvement, but the goal of trying to give an objective, clear, easy to understand resource is absolutely something that we need.

Mr. SCOTT OF VIRGINIA. Once you know what works how do you get—do you have a training mechanism so teachers can actually get trained in what works or is it just sit there, they find out what works but don't know how to do it?

Mr. KEMPLE. I think the mechanisms for translating the evidence into practice are—in many ways are still wanting. I think from a policymaking perspective and from the perspective of trying to decide how to allocate scarce resources, I think one critical lever may very well be ensuring that if a state or a district wants to use federal resources or a district wants to use state resources, or if a school has access to some flexible resources they should be obligated to demonstrate that the way that they would like to use those resources has appropriate and rigorous evidence behind its effectiveness, and that they have a way of being able to link with the people who either have produced that evidence or started to translate it into guidelines—that they can use to implement their programs—

Mr. SCOTT OF VIRGINIA. Well, but how does—how does a teacher get trained in what works? I mean, he or she is sitting in the classroom, you read this research works, how do you learn how to do it?

Ms. LONG. I think that is where the practice guides come in, because that is taking of research and putting it into the pieces of the day-to-day job of a teacher, now what do you do with this information? How do you actually apply it in your classroom? And so that is another translation function that IES has taken upon itself.

Mr. SCOTT OF VIRGINIA. And is it working?

Ms. Christie?

Ms. CHRISTIE. If I could just make one suggestion that I don't hear talked about at all, and that is if every time there was a new piece that was put into the What Works Clearinghouse or a new conclusion drawn, if that could be pushed out to school boards across this country, it is school boards, then, that help decide how professional development is delivered, how teachers collaborate within the districts, what they should be looking at.

And IES already has the contact information for every district. You wouldn't have to have all the boards. The districts then could relay that to the—

Mr. SCOTT OF VIRGINIA. My time is almost expired. I wanted to get in another question about whether or not there is research on nonverbal communications, which can be very important in how children react to education.

Mr. KEMPLE. Not something I am very familiar with.

Mr. SCOTT OF VIRGINIA. You are not?

Mr. KEMPLE. Not, no.

Ms. CHRISTIE. I am not sure what you are asking.

Mr. SCOTT OF VIRGINIA. Nonverbal communications and teacher interacting with the student, conveying caring or not caring and the children reacting to that. Is there any research on that?

Ms. CHRISTIE. I am not familiar with the research on that but I am familiar with the tools that IES has to quickly find out who else knows or done any research on that.

Mr. SCOTT OF VIRGINIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Holt is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOLT. Thank you.

I thank the witnesses.

This is encouraging. I am hearing a—what I had hoped to hear about IES.

I will begin by saying we badly need rigorous research. We have been hampered for, well, decades—maybe forever—because every policymaker, every school board member, policymaker on the state or federal level was a student and, therefore, is an expert on education. And so we end up with the same old, with frequent overlays of short-lived fads. And so I hope that we can make the most of this rigorous research.

The proposal came from Mr. Walberg on the other side that we devolve this to the states or turn it over to the private sector. Let me ask two specific questions: Are most states doing rigorous, relevant research? Does anybody—

Ms. LONG. My sense is the answer is no because they don't have the capacity to do it.

Mr. HOLT. Okay. Is the private sector doing sufficient studies of rigorous, unbiased research that teachers or policymakers can trust?

Mr. KEMPLE. On their own initiative I would say very few, if any.

Mr. HOLT. So the conclusion I draw from that is we need this. So let me ask the next question: Do we need more of this? Are we close to saturation in producing the kinds of rigorous studies that we need to wisely spend many tens of billions of dollars every year in actually—well, in education?

Ms. LONG. No. Not at all.

Monitoring the applications for research proposals over time to IES, the quality of them has increased dramatically over time. And unfortunately, many of them are not funded, and during the last year there were a number of very highly rated research proposals through the peer review process that unfortunately were not able to be funded.

So there are many great—

Mr. HOLT. More than were funded? Were a minority of the well-reviewed proposals funded?

Ms. LONG. That is correct. That is correct.

Mr. HOLT. Okay. Does the IES review the—have there been studies within the IES of the application of former studies? Does the IES review the application over the years or the follow up that occurs on those studies?

Ms. LONG. There has been a lot of attention. It has looked back and it is hard to find out what impact those have had, and so this year there is actually a competition to establish a center of knowledge utilization just to address that issue as well as requiring funded researchers to have dissemination plans and communication with the field so that their research results are used by those practitioners.

Mr. HOLT. Changing the subject, one of the things we are asked to consider reauthorizing would be the state longitudinal data systems. Are any of the witnesses expert in the data systems? My specific question is, are we learning from the good data systems things that are useful in the classroom?

Mr. KEMPLE. I think we are just beginning that process. In New York City we have formed an explicit research alliance that works closely with the New York City public school system and have been able to acquire its entire administrative records database, along the same lines as what the state longitudinal data systems are supposed to be doing across the country.

It has turned out to be an incredibly valuable tool both for research and for policy and practice. I think to the degree that we can continue to help states both create these systems and then have them link up with the capacity to make use of those for research purposes, I think we will quickly see mechanisms that will allow that work to penetrate into schools and classrooms.

Mr. HOLT. And then I guess this is specifically for Dr. Kemple: How can research be embedded in the programs that are authorized and funded? How good a job are we doing at it? How could we make that happen?

Mr. KEMPLE. Again, I think this is something that has a long way to go, I think in two ways—one, particularly when there are hard decisions about how to make use of resources that can be used for innovation. I think any use of resources for innovation, be they from the federal, state, or local level, should be accompanied either by strong evidence that this innovation has the capacity to change teaching and learning in schools for the better; or B, if there is lacking evidence, that there is a requirement that the participants or the recipients of the funding be willing to participate in a rigorous research study to establish whether or not those resources are paying off in better teaching and learning.

Mr. HOLT. Thank you.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Hinojosa, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank you all for inviting this wonderful panel to talk to us about improving teaching and learning in classrooms across our country.

I want to say that I am a strong supporter of the regional educational laboratories and the comprehensive center programs. My first question is going to go to Dr. Long about the new emphasis at the Institute of Education Sciences, you call IES, on knowledge utilization, which I think is just a fancy way of saying we want to ensure that educators know about the research on what works.

Therefore, can you tell us about the work at IES Sciences in this area with early childhood development?

Ms. LONG. With early childhood development specifically? Unfortunately, I can't speak specifically to that area. I can say, generally the issue has been how do we translate our research, research that might be on early childhood education—while also trying to understand from the practitioners' view, what are the questions that they have, what are their pressing needs. You have to understand how they do their work so how they might actually change practice with the research results, so that it can't be just one-directional from IES. What IES needs to do and is trying to do is build a two-way street so we have communication from the people who work with our young children of what they need, what are the pressing questions, and how they might—how they do their work and then how the research might be able to inform that.

Mr. HINOJOSA. I am going to ask another question and probably come back to you, Dr. Long.

Ms. Christie, you spoke about your learning the importance of education from cradle to age 3 years of age, and you used your children that you stayed home and educated them at home. Why do you think that state and federal elected officials do not consider a high priority to invest in early education programs?

And the reason I ask you that question is that years ago Buck McKeon was chairman of our Subcommittee on Higher Ed and took a codel to China. We were trying to find out why it was that they would usually beat the United States on competition—international scholastic competition. And one of the people who answered our question was an older gentleman—a professor—and he said it was a very simple answer.

The formula he said was early reading plus writing equals success in school, and that they started reading to the children the

moment they were born. So they read to them in the cradle and then they already knew how to read by the time they were 3 years old and pecking on a computer at age 4 to tell us what they read. It was that simple.

So you tell me, was it research that you read that made you believe that you wanted to stay home and spend the time you did with your children from the time they were born on?

Ms. CHRISTIE. When I was in my preparation program for being educated as a teacher, yes, that was part of the program. I do believe state policymakers are very compelled to address those early years. Sometimes it is simply a fiscal issue, and I think we are seeing the investments go up.

We track state of the state addresses by all the governors and I can tell you, it was a prominent part of a number of governors this year and that is not unusual. We do see that. So they are very—they are not uninvolved in it. They are very, very interested and most of the time it is a fiscal issue.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Dr. Long, do you have research that shows that it is working, where they invest in the regions of the country in the cradle to age 3 and 4 on early childhood development?

Ms. LONG. There is certainly a research basis for those early investments have long-term impacts. There have even been studies that looked at children in preschool and then followed them years and years later to see that they were doing better in high school and better in college. So there is that research basis.

And I would say in a short amount of time, as we have started to collect this information, fund additional information, and put it in a central location so we can figure out how all the different pieces of the puzzle fit together, we are starting to come out with some strong conclusions about what does work, although there is so much more that we don't understand and so many things we have found that don't work, and so we need alternatives.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the gentleman.

I just have a couple questions.

Again, I want to thank the witnesses. I appreciate all your testimony. Let me start with Mr. Scott.

Your testimony stated, I believe, that the performance measures that IES uses do not reflect current programs, so can you provide some specific examples of this?

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Chairman, I do think it is important to note that when you look across any number of the current performance measures IES has in place, they are actually doing quite well in many areas. A couple areas that we have identified where we believe there needs to be more transparency and accountability includes the RELs as well as some of the new research grant programs that IES has not yet developed performance measures for those activities.

Mr. ROKITA. And what can we be doing better to—or IES be doing better to accurately evaluate its programs? Is that the same thing?

Mr. SCOTT. I think first of all, involve policymakers and practitioners in the research agenda setting; develop relevant, timely, up-to-date performance measures; have the information necessary to

evaluate those activities; and then hold those activities accountable.

Mr. ROKITA. What was the second to the last one?

Mr. SCOTT. Develop the measures, involve stakeholders in the research agenda setting—

Mr. ROKITA. What would a couple examples of performance measures be in your mind?

Mr. SCOTT. You know, for example, identifying feedback opportunities to involve stakeholders, measuring how you are doing in relation to what the stakeholders' needs are. They do have a number of measures related to the What Works Clearinghouse, in terms of the level—the number of interventions that have been supported by their activities.

And so I do think, you know, they have made progress in this area, but particularly as it relates to the regional educational labs and some of the new grant programs, we do believe it is critically important that you establish performance measures in those areas—particularly the RELs. That is a significant investment on the part of IES, and so to not have public reporting and not have public accountability around that activity we believe is a key area for improvement.

Mr. ROKITA. And again, what would—in your mind, what would that public reporting look like?

Mr. SCOTT. As again, you know, having key indicators, performance measures, in terms what the expectations are for the RELs, but then having feedback—

Mr. ROKITA. What would that be? I am trying to get you to be specific and quantitative.

Mr. SCOTT. Quantitative. Could be, once again, meeting the needs—having a feedback loop in terms of meeting the needs of the stakeholders, having clear expectations in terms of how you expect the RELs to be engaged with the research alliance, and then hold them accountable for that cooperation.

Mr. ROKITA. Okay. I am going to leave you alone.

[Laughter.]

Mr. SCOTT. I don't want to get too prescriptive here. I mean, one of the things we—

Mr. ROKITA. Okay. Fair enough.

Mr. SCOTT [continuing]. Do believe is having both quantitative and qualitative measures in place.

Mr. ROKITA. There we go. You got—

Mr. SCOTT. Customer service satisfaction. That is the word I was looking for when I was talking about getting feedback. I mean, the National Center for Education Statistics does a really good job of that, and when we talked to the stakeholders that is one of the things they pointed out is that a lot of the projects and the products produced by NCES are really useful, and there are clearly opportunities for IES to do that across more of its activities is to get that direct customer satisfaction survey information and use it directly.

Mr. ROKITA. Okay.

Dr. Long, your testimony—I conclude IES has a broad mission to provide useful information to many different audiences. In times of limited resources, though, and this was touched on a little bit ear-

lier, in your opinion, who can benefit most from IES products? Remember, we are broke.

Ms. LONG. Yes. There are many audiences. I think policymakers absolutely need the information that is coming from IES to make better decisions what to do with limited resources, what works, and for what cost.

I think researchers absolutely sending signals to them about how they should spend their time. I don't think IES needs to do everything; it needs to leverage the field. And by using the signals, the incentives, its convening power to take the researchers out in the field, the organizations, whether they be states or school boards, to get that information out to them.

I think it also does have a translation responsibility to the field to make clear what do you do with this research information, but then again, working in concert with other organizations and associations to get the information out there.

Mr. ROKITA. And for what audience? For policymakers, you say, and for who else?

Ms. LONG. I said for policymakers, I said education researchers should help direct where they are putting their efforts. I said in terms of the field—so teachers, principals, superintendents—the translation function of IES is very important. But again, to get that out I think it is working in concert with organizations and associations that are in the field—not for them to necessarily do everything else, but they have the unique position of being completely objective, having convening power like no one else does, and so they can send signals, incentives, bring people together in a very different way than any other organization.

Mr. ROKITA. Okay. Fair enough.

And then in the 30 seconds I have left, if the two remaining witnesses would like to respond to either of my questions, you are welcome to.

Dr. Kemple, in about 10 seconds?

Mr. KEMPLE. Yes. I think the Congress and the U.S. Department of Education I think would be the primary beneficiaries of IES's work, both on the quality and the quantity of work that gets produced. And in terms of answering questions about what—not just about effective practices but also about ineffective practices, I think it is the responsibility to the public to be able to—

Mr. ROKITA. Thank you.

Mr. KEMPLE [continuing]. Invest in learning about whether—

Mr. ROKITA. Appreciate that.

Ms. Christie?

Ms. CHRISTIE. I would like to suggest that folks look at the government performance accountability system in Washington, go to their site, look at the kinds of metrics they report on on their site. It is very impressive, and I wish more folks, both state and federal, would do the similar thing.

Mr. ROKITA. Okay. Thank you.

Again, I thank the witnesses and now I yield to the Ranking Member Miller for his closing remarks.

Mr. MILLER. Thank you very much, and I want to thank the chairman of the subcommittee, and the Chairman, for holding this hearing. I think it is very important.



You know, I think that the testimony is pretty clear that we have developed a much better system than we had before, and the question is, how do you hold on to that and how do you maintain the integrity of that system and sort of grow the confidence of the practitioners, if you will, from governors on down all the way to the classroom.

And, Mr. Scott, how do you get into a situation, as you point out on page six here, on this question of the peer review process starting to stretch itself out and growing from 117 days in 2011 to 175 days in 2012? I mean, this can be the death of an organization.

Mr. SCOTT. And I think that is—

Mr. MILLER. You know, we are in a dynamic system where, at our level in our districts people think about this in 9-month segments, and what is new has got to show up on a fairly regular basis, I mean, and coincide with the needs of the users, which are, dictated by the school year if nothing else.

Mr. SCOTT. Well, I think that issue sort of points to two things that we talk about in our statement, one being the importance of sort of balancing the rigorous research with ensuring it is timely, and useful, and relevant. And the second issue is having IES use—IES gathers a lot of information about a lot of things going on under its—or in its purview, but we have found that at times there are gaps in how they use that information to oversee the research, and the issue of the peer review is a perfect example of that.

It is not clear to us that they were really aware of this until we started asking some questions about what was going on with the timing here, and now they are paying attention to it. Our point to IES would be there are other processes that you have in place that you should be constantly monitoring to ensure things don't spin out of control or start to grow and expand in a way that negatively impacts the end users of the information and the research.

Mr. MILLER. So you think this can, in fact, be corrected, in terms of getting the peer review condensed—I mean, if people have signed on to participate in that process, maybe they have signed on to do 1,000 of these, I don't know, but at some point you have got to know what your contractors—what the capacity is to participate. You may want them for their name, for their specialties and their expertise, but if they don't allow the time so they can fully participate you have got to move on and find, I think, somebody else at some point.

Mr. SCOTT. It is important for IES to have the right information to monitor the performance and then to take the necessary corrective actions to ensure that that peer review process doesn't continue to grow and negatively impact its ability to provide the research.

Mr. MILLER. Can you just put in,—quickly, your concerns about the regional education labs? You come across that in your testimony—

Mr. SCOTT. If you look historically at some of the challenges around the regional education labs, we continue to be concerned that there are not clear performance measures for the RELs, that it is not publicly available. IES is collecting some information. IES also has an ongoing evaluation of the previous cohort of the RELs that is due to be completed at some point here in the near future.

We do think it is important, though, for accountability reasons that there be some public accounting for those RELs, that they have clear performance measures and indicators, and then that IES take the necessary action to hold them accountable for their performance.

Mr. MILLER. I mean, this is—at least as it has been presented—this is supposed to be some high performance operation, and the question that you are raising to some extent is whether or not that, in fact, you are getting a high performance operation in some of the regions—

Mr. SCOTT. Well, we have heard comments from certain stakeholders that certain RELS are more productive than others, the relevance of the research that certain RELs produce is more relevant than others. I think the question we have for IES is, you know, at what point are we going to have more public accounting for the performance of the RELs? That is where you start—public accounting for their performance. And then you can make the necessary decisions after then how to move forward.

Mr. MILLER. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the ranking member.

Let me again and finally thank the witnesses for your testimony. It was very enlightening. Very much appreciate it.

I think what we learned is that the quality of education research has greatly improved in the last decade, and for that we are thankful. And we are thankful in particular for your leadership in the field.

However, like most things in life, there are places that we can look to strengthen the evaluation and performance requirements for IES programs and ensure that the research coming out of it is rigorous, relevant, and useful to education practitioners. And I think you saw that in the questioning by several members this morning. I think that ought to be our next goal and a continuation of the work that we have done.

So I look forward to working with my colleagues to reauthorize the Education Sciences Reform Act in a positive way that recognizes the fiscal condition we are in, how to leverage not only the resources of IES but its partners at the federal and state level, and certainly the leadership of each of the witnesses here today.

And with that, seeing no further business before this committee, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:27 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

