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July 18, 2012

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington DC 20548-0001

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

The federal government has maintained a long-standing role in conducting and promoting education research. In 2002, Congress enacted the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA), which established the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the primary federal education research organization within the Department of Education. IES, headed by a presidentially appointed director, provides national leadership in expanding fundamental knowledge and understanding of education to provide reliable information on:

- The condition of education in the United States;
- The practices that contribute to academic achievement and improved access to educational opportunities for all students; and
- The effectiveness of federal and other education programs.

To fulfill its mission, IES conducts education research, funds research through grants and other agreements, and disseminates its findings. In fiscal year 2011, the agency had a budget of more than \$600 million.

Despite its major involvement, little is known about the effectiveness of the research and tools published and utilized by IES. Additionally, there is growing concern about how IES promotes the use of its research and tools and ensures its research is relevant to policymakers and practitioners.

As such, we respectfully request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct a study to determine the following:

1. How do the costs, timeliness, relevance, and usefulness of the reports and studies conducted, and tools developed, by IES compare to other federal agencies and entities and public and private research entities?
2. How do the research standards, including the peer-review process and the use of the definitions of 'scientifically-based research' and 'scientifically-valid research', adhered to by IES affect the relevance and usefulness of the research to policymakers and practitioners?
3. How effective are the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs), Comprehensive Centers, National Research and Development Centers, and National Center for Special Education Research at fulfilling their missions of developing, conducting, applying, and disseminating research?
4. How effective are the aforementioned entities at coordinating their required activities with each other, other federal agencies and entities, and other public and private research entities? Does IES' governance structure contribute to/hinder the programs' effectiveness?
5. How effective is IES at disseminating research findings and products through the tools and structures available to the office?

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please contact Mandy Schaumburg (mandy.schaumburg@mail.house.gov) at 202-225-6558 (Chairman Kline), or Jamie Fasteau, (jamie.fasteau@mail.house.gov) at 202-225-3725 (Senior Democratic Member Miller).

Sincerely,



JOHN KLINE
Chairman
Committee on Education and the Workforce



GEORGE MILLER
Senior Democratic Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce