October 25, 2016

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
2406 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
2365 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey,

As you consider the next steps for the FY 2017 budget, we, the undersigned individuals and organizations representing education research scientists, institutions, organizations, deans, and faculty are writing to convey our strong support to restore FY 2016 levels for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). We are greatly concerned about and deeply oppose the significant cuts to IES included in the FY2017 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill passed by the Appropriations Committee on July 14. The committee cut $82 million in funding from an already underfunded budget, threatening the tremendous contributions that IES is making to support education research that informs efforts to improve our schools and support our students.

As the independent education research, evaluation and statistics institute within the Department of Education, IES continues to produce rigorous knowledge that drives practical solutions to our nation’s education challenges. Investing in scientifically valid research benefits teaching and learning while laying the groundwork for an educated population and future workforce. The promise of this education evidence base has been explicitly recognized under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, bipartisan legislation that requires increased use of evidence-based education policies. Unfortunately, as states are moving forward to implement ESSA, the Appropriations Committee voted to cut funding for IES, the source of the evidence that would empower states to successfully advance the quality of education across this nation. If these cuts are part of a final budget agreement, students across the country will lose out on the benefits from advances in research that best support their progress.

The bill approved by the Appropriations Committee would cut all but one line in the IES budget, with the largest cut to Research, Development, and Dissemination (RDD). The proposed $41 million decrease, to $154 million, is below the RDD budget for every year since 2004. These cuts would be devastating to the quantifiable progress being made by programs under the RDD line. For example, visits to the What Works Clearinghouse website climbed by 7 percent compared to last year, with 2,807,060 page views since the beginning of FY 2016. That is a monthly average of 311,896 page views. IES is also in the process of upgrading and relaunching the Find What Works search. This tool will help states meet the requirements of ESSA to provide evidence supporting the programs used in schools. Additionally, thanks to ongoing efforts to continually improve accessibility and usefulness of the Center, visits to the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) have also increased since last year, with 33,401,955 page views of the website since the beginning of FY 2016. The proposed reductions in the FY2017 budget threaten to undercut both programs’ gains, limiting access to useful research for practitioners and policymakers even as interest in such research is growing.

Under the bill passed by the Appropriations Committee, the proposed funding levels for the National Center for Education Research (NCER) and National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) would prevent new research grants entirely, severely limiting the ability of researchers to explore and...
develop emerging interventions. Last year IES introduced low-cost, short duration evaluations holding tremendous potential to accelerate the contributions of research. In response to the needs of the field, IES also established new research networks on college completion and science teaching. We urge the Appropriations Committee to not only restore these funds, but also return NCSER funding to its previous level of funding in FY 2010, $71 million.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress and the National Assessment Governing Board would see a combined decrease of $20.5 million, almost 13 percent, from the current $157 million budget. As the Nation’s Report Card, these assessments inform us how students in the United States compare to students in other countries, including in math and science. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) collects, analyzes and reports statistics on key measures of international comparisons of students, enrollment projection, education expenditures and teacher demand and supply – and yet, the House bill passed by the committee further cuts the current NCES budget of $137 million by $9 million. Finally, the current legislation proposes reduced funding for Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS), a critical tool for educators, officials, and parents to track student performance over time and across different schools and districts.

While other nations are informing education practice with research, data, and statistics and demonstrating measurable improvements, the cuts in the current bill put us at a disadvantage. Given the small overall budget size of IES, these cuts reflect significant proportions of the various budget lines.

As education research scientists, institutions, organizations, deans, and faculty, we urge you to invest in education research. We have witnessed the results of employing valid, reliable research to improving outcomes for all students, and we understand the truly detrimental impact these cuts would have. Given the importance of education to building a strong economy and meeting our nation’s commitment to equity and opportunity for all young people, we urge you to restore funding for these essential programs. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Organizational Signatories

114th Partnership
American Educational Research Association
American Psychological Association
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
American University of Health Sciences
Association of American Universities
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Ball State University Teacher’s College
Bethel School District
Boston College Lynch School of Education
Boston University School of Education
Carnegie Mellon University
Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning
Center for Behavioral Education & Research, Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut
Center for Research and Reform in Education, Johns Hopkins University
Center for the Study of Education Policy
Clowder Consulting
Cognitive Science Society
Collaborative Center for Literacy Development (University of Kentucky)
College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University
College of Education and Human Services, Montclair State University
College of Education at Boise State University
College of Education University of Oregon
College of Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
College of Education, University of Nevada Las Vegas
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Cooperative Ventures
CoreCollaborative International
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Exceptional Children, Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD)
Council for Exceptional Children, Division for Early Childhood
Council for Exceptional Children-Division for Research
Drexel University School of Education
Easterseals
Educational and Community Supports (University of Oregon)
Education Management & Curriculum Consultants Group LLC
Educational Leaders Without Borders
Evaluation Strategy, LLC
Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences
Florida State University College of Education
Gordon & Heller, Inc.
Houston Education Research Consortium
illuminateD LLC
**Individual Signatories**

Serdar Abaci, Indiana University  
Abbas Abbasov, Teachers College, Columbia University  
Noor Amal Abdulaziz, University of North Texas  
Sara Abercrombie, Northern Arizona University  
Issam Abi-El-Mona, Rowan University  
Wafa Abou-Zaki, Independent researcher  
Lisa Abrams, Virginia Commonwealth University  
Tashia Abry, Arizona State University  
Serra Acar, DEC  
Parul Acharya, Columbus State University  
David Achin, North Carolina State University  
Cheryl Achterberg, The Ohio State University  
Jennifer Acosta, Duke University Undergraduate Student  
Emma Adam, Northwestern University  
Barbara Adams, University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Karlyn Adams-Wiggins, University of Texas at Tyler  
Temitope Adeoye, AERA  
Ani Aghababyan  
Jean Agosto, AERA  
Earl Aguilera, Arizona State University  
Wondimu Ahmed, The University of Akron  
Janet Ahn, William Paterson  
Kristy Akana, University of Hawaii at Manoa  
Emmanuel Akanwa, Central Michigan University  
Samira Al Hosni, William Paterson  
Stephanie Al Otaiba, Southern Methodist University  
Jeffrey Albrecht, University of Michigan  
Vianna Alcantara, Annenberg Institute for School Reform- Brown University  
Meltem Alemdar, Georgia Tech  
L. Blair Alexander, Texas A&M University  
Usama Ali, ETS  
Catherine Alia, HISD  
riham alieldin, University of Rochester  
Audrey Allan, Public School Educator - Hunter Street Elementary School  
Holly Allen, Brigham Young University  
Shawndra Allen, UIC  
Melanie Allen, Davis School District  
Laura Allen, Arizona State University  
Gabrielle Allen, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Elaine Allensworth, University of Chicago  
Andrea Allio, Graduate School of Education, Binghamton University  
Jill Allor, Southern Methodist University  
Kristine Alpi, North Carolina State University  
Chandra Alston, University of Michigan  
Armando Altamirano, New Mexico State University  
Rafael Alvarado, Pennsylvania State University  
Nicole Amador  
Mauriell Amechi, University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Margaret Ameel, Eastern Michigan University  
Steven Amendum, University of Delaware  
Eric Anderman, The Ohio State University  
Kate Anderson, Arizona State University  
Erin Anderson, University of Denver  
Daniel Anderson, University of Oregon  
Sara Anderson, West Virginia University  
Eleanor Anderson, Northwestern University  
Meredith Anderson  
Jeff Anderson  
James Anderson, Interim Dean/Education/UIUC  
Thomas Andre, Iowa State University, Professor Emeritus, Retired  
Lindi Andreasen, Utah State University  
Anika Anthony, AERA  
Vanessa Anthony-Stevens, University of Idaho  
Mollie Appelgate, Iowa State University  
Andrew Aprile, CUNY  
Talal Arabeyyat, University at Buffalo  
Caren Arbeit  
Kathleen Arnold, Duke University  
Noelle Arnold, The Ohio State University  
Meagan Arrastia, Valdosta State University  
Ann Arthur, University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Angela Arzubiaga, Arizona State University  
Chloe Asselin, CUNY- Graduate Center  
Kyle Atabay, University of Hawaii at Manoa  
Allison Atteberry, University of Colorado-Boulder  
Maraci Aubel, University of Kansas  
Lisa Auslander  
Theresa Austin, University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
Ann Austin-Beck, Michigan State University
Geraldine Clifford, AERA
Maria Coady, University of Florida
Paul Cobb, Vanderbilt University
Cynthia Coburn, Northwestern University
Joshua Cohen, Visiting Assistant Professor/Virginia Tech
Benjamin Cohen
Michael P. Cohen
Lora Cohen-Vogel, Distinguished Professor, UNC
David Coker, University of Delaware
Nicholas Colangelo, College of Education, University of Iowa
Patricia Williams Coleman
Jung Coen, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Marilee Coles-Ritchie, Westminster College
Brian Collins, Hunter College, CUNY
Mary Carol Combs, University of Arizona
Jere Confrey, North Carolina State University
Luke Conlin, Salem State University
Faith Connolly, Baltimore Education Research Consortium
Carol McDonald Connor, University of California, Irvine
Maureen Conroy, University of Florida
Christina Convertino, University of Texas at El Paso
Katherine Conway, City University of New York
Audrey Conway, University of Kentucky
North Cooc, The University of Texas at Austin
Laurel Cooley, Brooklyn College, City University of New York
Matthew Cooper Borkenhagen, UW-Madison
Catherine Corbin, University of Virginia
William Corbin, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
Roisin Corcoran, Johns Hopkins University
Sean Corcoran, New York University
Paula Cordeiro, University of San Diego
Danya Corkin, Rice University School Math Project
Kathleen Corley, Arizona State University
Peter Cormas, California University of PA
Daniel Corral, University of Wisconsin - Madison
Eden Cortez, University of Utah
Gayle Cosby, Indianapolis Public Schools and IUPUI
Lara Costa, UNC Chapel Hill
Shelly Counsell, University of Memphis
Azure Covington, University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Amanda Cox, University of Pennsylvania
Michael Coyne, University of Connecticut
Brandon Craig, Polk County Public Schools
Xiu Cravens, Vanderbilt University
Katherine Crawford-Garrett, University of New Mexico
Margaret Crocco, Michigan State University
Robert Croninger, University of Maryland
Amy Crosson, The Pennsylvania State University
Kelli Cummings, University of Maryland
Svjetlana Curcic, University of Mississippi
Stephanie Current-Jolly, Boston University
Reagan Curtis, West Virginia University
Jenna Cushing-Leubner, University of Minnesota
Philip Cusick, Michigan State University
Lori Czop Assaf, Texas State University
Megan D, AERA
Katie Dahlke, American Institutes for Research
Maggie Dahn, UCLA
Ting Dai, Temple University
Debbie Dailey, University of Central Arkansas
Denise Daley, Student- SUNY Buffalo
Lorraine Dame, University of Minnesota Rochester
Danielle Dani, Ohio University
Sharon Dannels, George Washington University
Michael Dantley, Miami University
Shawn Datchuk, University of Iowa
Alan Davis, University of Colorado Denver
Yolanda Davis, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign
Catrina Davis
Heather A. Davis, Montessori Institute of San Diego
Shirley Dawson, Weber State University
Caleb Dawson, Gonzaga University
Zandra de Araujo, University of Missouri
Serra De Arment, Virginia Commonwealth University
Diana de la Rosa-Pohl, University of Houston
Richard De Lisi, Rutgers University
Linda DeAngelo, University of Pittsburgh
Drew Debro, University of Hawai’i Center for Disability Studies
Stephen DeGiulio, New Mexico State University
George Farkas, School of Education, University of California, Irvine
Elizabeth Farley-Ripple, Center for Research Use in Education
Patricia Farrell-Cole, Van Andel Institute
Camille A. Farrington, University of Chicago, Consortium on School Research
Christine Farrugia, Institute of International Education
Daniel Fasko, Bowling Green State University
Nafsaniath Fathema, University of Wisconsin Madison
Dr. Vicki Fawcett-Adams, AERA
Lisa Fazio, Vanderbilt University
Susie Fegraeus, Southern Methodist University
Adam Feinberg, University of Connecticut
Pamela Felder, University of Maryland Eastern Shore
Sue Feldman, Lewis and Clark College Graduate School of Education
Veronica Fematt, UCSB
Yanan Feng, Indiana University Bloomington
Ray Fenton, American Educational Research Association
Rhode Fernandez, George Mason University
Ralph P. Ferretti, Director and Professor/School of Education
John Ferron, University of South Florida
Amanda Ferster, Georgia Center for Assessment
Angel Fettig, University of Massachusetts Boston
Sarah Feuerbacher, SMU
Reza Feyzi Behnagh, University at Albany, State University of New York
Deborah Fields, Utah State University
Tanya Figueroa, UCLA
Cherese Fine, Clemson University
Bridgid Finn, Educational Testing Service
Kara Finnigan, University of Rochester
Elizabeth Finocchiaro, Saint Louis University
William Firestone, Rutgers Graduate School of Education
Melissa Fischer, Golden Apple Foundation
Gustavo Fischman, Arizona State University
Joanne Fish, Fontbonne University
Seth Matthew Fishman, Villanova University
Katie Fitch, University of Oregon
Gail Fitzgerald, University of Missouri
Andrea Flanagan, Universidad de Valparaiso
Brian Flay, Boise State University
Nicole Fletcher, University of Pennsylvania
Robert Floden, College of Education, Michigan State University
Elizabeth Flores, University of California, Davis
Paul Flores, Capella University and Valencia College
Nieves Flores, UOG CEDDERS
Stella Flores, NYU
Lindsay Flynn, CEC-DR
Anne Foegen, Iowa State University
Jeremy Ford, Boise State University
Margaret Ford, Southern New Hampshire University
Angel Ford, GWU
Tim Ford, University of Oklahoma
Wellesley Foshay, University of North Texas at Denton
James Foster, AERA
Lauren Foxworth, State University of New York
Joana Franco, Utah State University
Megan Franke, UCLA
Stacy Frazier, Florida International University
Eric Freeman, Wichita State University
Kimberley Freeman, HU
Pat Friedrichsen, University of Missouri
Erika Friedrich, University of Iowa
Michael Frye, Abt Associates
Brenda Fuentes, Northern Illinois University
Ken Fujimoto, Loyola University Chicago
Mary Fuller, UNT
Larissa Gaia, Arizona State University
Karen Symms Gallagher, University of Southern California Rossier School of Education
Anne Galletta, Cleveland State University
Dinna Gallo, University of Illinois
Anthony Gambino, University of Connecticut
Mollie Gambone, Drexel University
Brian Gane, University of Illinois at Chicago
Ann Gansemer-Topf, Iowa State University
Taylor Gara, University of California, Irvine
Lisa Garbrecht, University of Texas at Austin Center for STEM Education
Crystal Garcia, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Angela Garcia-Sims, Ph.D., AERA
Ruth Gardner, University of Missouri, College of Education
Kimberly Gardner, Kennesaw State University
Carol Garman, University of Missouri
Laurie Garo, UNC-Charlotte
Stacey Garrett, Clemson University
Ruben Garza, Texas State University
Regina Garza Mitchell, Western Michigan University
Billie Gastic, New York University
Mary Jo Gates, University of Kansas
Brandy Gatlin, Georgia State University
Jennifer Gatz, Stony Brook University
Chetanath Gautam Gautam, Delaware State University
Tanya Gaxiola, UCLA
Xun Ge, University of Oklahoma
Brian Gearin, University of Oregon
Hunter Gehlbach, UCSB
Tray Geiger, Arizona State University
Joanna Geller, Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University
Kathy Geller, Drexel University
Joel Gendler
Casey George-Jackson, University of Louisville
Michael Giamello, Oregon State University
Matt Giani, University of Texas at Austin
Twyla Gibson, University of Missouri
Bradley S. Gibson, University of Notre Dame
Robert Giebitz, University of New Mexico
Diane Gifford, Southern Methodist University
Barbara Gilbert, Harvard-Center for Ed. Policy Research
Melissa Gilbert, Stanford University
Vandra Gill, NC State University
Tashanna Gillenwater-Catron,
Carol Gilles, University of Missouri
Amy Gillespie Rouse, Southern Methodist University
Elizabeth Gilliland, University of Hawaii Manoa
Rick Ginsberg, University of Kansas
Mark Ginsberg, Ph.D., College of Education and Human Development, George Mason University
Drew Gitomer, Rutgers University Graduate School of Education
Karen Givvin, UCLA
Kalina Gjicali, City University of New York (CUNY)
Jessica Gladstone, University of Maryland
Tonya Glantz, Rhode Island College
Bethany Gleason, Vanderbilt University
Natalya Gnedko-Berry, AIR
Samantha Godbey, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Peter Goff, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Jennifer Golanics
Ricki Goldman, AERA
Angela Gomez, Sam Houston State University
Xiaoyang Gong, UMD
Xiaopeng Gong, Western Oregon University
Matthew Gonzales, Dwight School
Melissa Gonzales, University of the Incarnate Word
Gloria Gonzalez, AERA
Maria Lidia Gonzalez
Pilar Gonzalez, Education Development Center, Inc.
Chaz Gonzalez, University at Buffalo
Glenn Good, University of Florida
Mark Gooden, University of Texas-Austin
Amanda Goodwin, Vanderbilt University
Donna Goodwin, University of Northern Colorado
David Goodwin, Missouri State University
A. Lin Goodwin, Teachers College, Columbia University
Maithreyi Gopalan, Indiana University, Bloomington
Cynthia Gordon da Cruz, Saint Mary’s College of CA
Amelia Gotwals, Michigan State University
Karen M Gourd, University of Washington Bothell
Amy Grack Nelson, University of Minnesota
Lawrence Gradman, NYC Dept. of Education - Retired
Nicholas Graham, University of California, Irvine
Eliot Graham, Rutgers University
Kristine Grant, Drexel University
Melva Grant, AERA
Anne Gray, Purdue University
Shelley Gray, Arizona State University
Duane Graysay, Syracuse University
Paulo Graziano, Florida International University
Andre Green
Ryan Green, Victory
Brett Greenald, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Barbara Greene, University of Oklahoma
Steven Greenstein, Montclair State University
Anne Gregory, Rutgers University
James Gresham, George Washington University
Monica Gribben, HumRRO
Jean Griffin, Temple University
Whitney Griffin, University of Washington
Jeffrey Grigg, Johns Hopkins School of Education
Frank Griggs, University of Connecticut
Rene Grimes, UT Austin
Jason Grissom, Vanderbilt University
Karri Grob, UM-Flint
Jonathon Grooms, The George Washington University
Dominic Gullo, Drexel University
Mindy Gumpert, Old Dominion University
Mustafa Gunozu, University of Nevada Las Vegas
Michael Guo-Brennan, Troy University
John T. Guthrie, University of Maryland College Park
Kris D. Gutierrez, University of California, Berkeley
Sybille Guy, The Research Institute at Western Oregon University
Kelly Guyotte, The University of Alabama
Gey-Hong Gweon, Physics Front LLC
Jason Haas, MIT Media Lab
Amy Hackenberg, Indiana University
Roxana Hadad, Northeastern Illinois University/
University of Illinois at Chicago / UCLA
Xenia Hadjioannou, Pennsylvania State University
Rebecka Hagerty, AERA
Olivia Halic, International Baccalaureate
Gene E. Hall, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Simin Hall, Virginia Tech
Stephanie Hall, University of Maryland
Colby Hall, The University of Texas at Austin
Nicole Hallinen, Temple University
Megan Hallissey, Southern Illinois University
Peter Halpin, New York University
Stephen Hamilton, Cornell University
Floyd M Hammack, New York University
Hyemin Han, University of Alabama
Matthew Hanauer, Indiana University
Christine Hancock, University of Kansas
Victoria Hand, University of Colorado Boulder
Emily Hangen, University of Rochester
Maria Hankey, Virginia Tech
Dan Hanley, Western Washington University
Jane Hannaway, Georgetown University
Mark Hansen, University of California, Los Angeles
John Hanson
Deborah Hanuscin, University of Missouri
Assunta Hardy, Hezel Associates
Jessica K. Hardy, University of Louisville
Linda Harklau, University of Georgia
Ruth Harman, University of Georgia
Mary Harris, University of North Texas
Douglas Harris, Tulane University
Donna Harris
Jeni Hart, University of Missouri
Elizabeth Hartmann, Lasell College
Ayesha Hashim, University of Southern California
Michael Haslip, Drexel University
Deryl Hatch, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
John Hathcoat, James Madison University
Leshell Hatley, Ph.D., Coppin State University
Courtney Hattan, University of Maryland, College Park
Amy Hauenstein, AERA
Sonya Hayes, Louisiana State University
Martha Hayward, WSU-COE
Qwei He, ETS
James Hearn, University of Georgia
Ryan Heath, University of Chicago
Susan Hedges, University of North Carolina
Jay Heffron, Soka University of America
Carolyn Heinrich, Vanderbilt University
Joan Heller, Ph.D., Heller Research Associates
Esthe Hellmann, AERA
Mary Louise Hemmeter, Vanderbilt University
William Hemphill, East Tennessee State University
Markesha Henderson, University of West Georgia
Jeffrey Henig, Teachers College, Columbia University
Stephan Henry, REASolutions, LLC
Molly Henschel, Magnolia Consulting, LLC
Patricio Herbst, University of Michigan
Keith Herman, University of Missouri
Jungwon Hyun, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Lateefah Id-Deen, University of Louisville
Gina Ikemoto, New Leaders
Scott Imberman, Michigan State University
Sarah Ingebrand, UCI
William Ingle, University of Louisville
Sam Intrator, Smith College
Phillip Shawn Irvin, University of Oregon - Behavioral Research and Teaching
Shalyse Iseminger, Purdue University
Michael Ishimoto, University of California, Los Angeles
Susan Iverson, Manhattanville College
Gary Ivory, New Mexico State University
Richard Jacino, Illinois State University
Laura Jackins, Vanderbilt University
Cara Jackson, Urban Teachers
Lynn Jacobs, SMU
Stephen Jacobson, University at Buffalo
Erik Jacobson, Indiana University
May Jadallah, Illinois State University
Susan James, University of West Florida
Matthew James, UNC-G
Molly Jameson, University of Northern Colorado
Stacy-Ann January, University of South Carolina
Danielle Jarvie, CGU
William Jasper, Sam Houston State University
Marshall Jean, Institute for Policy Research - Northwestern University
Tonya N. Jefferson, CEC
Leslie Jenkins
Joanne Jennings, University of Delaware
Allan Jeong, Florid State University
Manuela Jimenez, Arizona State University
Nicholas Johnson, UCLA
Katie Johnson, NCSU
Amy Johnson, University of Southern Maine
Marcus Johnson, University of Cincinnati
Colin Johnson, Bing Nursery School Stanford University
Paige Johnson, The University of Texas at Austin
Marvin Johnson, Adjunct Lake Forest College
Amy Johnson, Arizona State University
Odis Johnson Jr., Washington University in St. Louis
Peter Jonas
Renata Jones, Boston College
Brittni Jones, Washington University in St. Louis
Nathan Jones, Boston University
Theresa Jones, Baltimore City Public Schools
Ela Joshi, Vanderbilt University
Sol Bee Jung, Johns Hopkins School of Education
Sean Justice, Texas State University, San Marcos
Akihito Kamata, Southern Methodist University
Shin Ji Kang, James Madison University
Sara Kangas, Lehigh University
Silverenia Kanoyton, Wayne State University
Ryan Kapa, The Ohio State University
Avi Kaplan, Temple University
Wendi Kappers, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Zorka Karanxha, University of South Florida
Meagan Karvonen, University of Kansas
Jen Katz-Buonincontro, Drexel University
Elzbieta Kazmierczak, University of Illinois
Troy Kearse
Natalie Keefer, University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Craig Kennedy, University of Georgia
Mary Kennedy, Michigan State University
Katrina Kennett, University of Illinois
Maureen Kenny, Boston College Lynch School of Education
Lisa Kensler, Auburn University
Jacob Kepins, University of California, Irvine
Sarah Kessler, North Carolina State University
Leanne Ketterlin Geller, Southern Methodist University
Lee Kibbie, University of Iowa
Yael Kidron, American Institutes for Research
Sarah Kiefer, AERA
Mary Theresa Kiely, Queens College, City University of New York
Mary Theresa Kiely, CUNY Queens College
Elizabeth Ann Kight, SMU
MIN KYU KIM, Georgia State University
Stephanie Kim, University of California, Berkeley
Sunyoung Kim, University of Alabama
Nari Kim, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh
Sujin Kim, University of Missouri
Taeyeon Kim, Michigan State University
Hyunjin Kim, University of Rhode Island
Jeffry King, Concordia University-Texas
Farina King, Northeastern State University
Chonika King, University of Tennessee
Susan Magliaro, Virginia Tech
Duhita Mahatmya, University of Iowa
Denise Mahfood, Columbia University
Yujiao Mai, University of Notre Dame
Linda Maier, Saint Martin’s University
Cecilia Maldonado, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Jacquelynn A Malloy, Clemson University
Kathy Malone, OSU
Adam Maltese, Indiana University
Michelle Mangan, Concordia University Chicago
Dwight Manning, Teachers College, Columbia University
Paul Manthei, Louisiana State University
Nancy Marchand-Martella, University of Oklahoma
Lauren Margulieux, Georgia State University
Russ Marion, Clemson University
Anna Markowitz, University of Virginia
Lori Marks, East Tennessee State University
Sherry Marlow Ormsby
Rose Marra, University of Missouri
Jacob Marszalek, University of Missouri-Kansas City
Christian Martell, University of Michigan
Christopher Martell, Boston University
Colin Martin
Directors of Research & Evaluation
Julie Martin, Clemson University
Jennifer Martin, UMU
James Martin, University of Oklahoma
Judith Martin, Boston University
Joyce Martin, Wayne State University
Camille Martina, University of Rochester
Daphne Martschenko, University of Cambridge
Loren Marulis, Connecticut College
Joanna Masingila, Syracuse University
Jennifer Mata-McMahon, DePaul University
Jeree Matherson, Teachers College, Columbia University
Peter Mathis
Sarup Mathur, Arizona State University
Becky Matz, Michigan State University
Wei-Cheng Mau, Wichita State University
Andrew Maul, University of California, Santa Barbara
Jennifer Mautone, The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia/University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine
Madeleine Mavrogordato, Michigan State University
Sheryl Maxsom, Desert Springs Educational Consulting
Deanna Maynard, University of Missouri
Rebecca Maynard, University of Pennsylvania
J.B. Mayo, Jr., University of Minnesota
David Mayrowetz, UIC
Ashley Mayworm, University of Maryland - Baltimore
Joan Mazur, University of Kentucky College of Education
Sherrell McArthur, Boston University
Lisa McBride, Capella University
Jody McBrien, University of South Florida Sarasota Manatee
Sarah McCartney, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Martha McCarthy, Loyola Marymount University
Cheryl McCarthy, Flagler College
Kathleen McCartney, Smith College
Sandee McClowry, New York University
Meaghan McCollow, Central Michigan University
Alexander McCormick, Indiana University Bloomington
Doug McCoy, Capella University
Daniel McCoy, Prince George's Community College
Deborah McCutchen, University of Washington
John McDonnell, University of Utah
Katherine McEldoon, Vanderbilt University
Elizabeth McEneaney, UMass-Amherst College of Education
Kelly McFaden, University of North Georgia
Lois McFadyen Christensen, AERA
Belinda McFeeters, TCSSP
Colin McGinnis, Being Black at School
Kent McIntosh, University of Oregon
Jessica McKeown, Indiana University
Debra McKeown, PhD, Georgia State University
Danette McKinley, FAIMER
Leigg McKinley, Arizona State University
Jen Munson, Stanford University
Aki Murata, University of Florida
Zuri Murphy, AERA
Amy Murphy, University of Georgia
P. Karen Murphy, American Educational Research Association
Regina Murphy, DCU Institute of Education
Melody Musgrove, Former OSEP Director
Susan Musilli, Appalachian State University
Mwarumba Mwavita, Oklahoma State University
Leslie Nabors Olah
Sara Nachtigal, University of Washington
Kathy Nakagawa, Arizona State University
SungJin Nam, University of Michigan
Rebecca Neal, Hamline
Adrian Neely, Doctoral Student/Georgia State University
Xyanthe Neider, Washington State University
Nancy Nelson, University of Oregon
Thomas Nelson Laird, Indiana University
Joseph Nese, University of Oregon
Jan Nespor, Ohio State University
George Newell, The Ohio State University
Roxanne Newton, NC Student Success Center
Sarah D. Newton, University of Connecticut
Deborah Newton
Vangee Nez, University of New Mexico COE
Tuan Nguyen, Vanderbilt University
Diep Nguyen, University of South Florida
Tutrang Nguyen, University of California, Irvine
Huong Nguyen, Texas A&M University - CC
Tekla Nicholas, Florida International University
Bianca Nightengale-Lee, University of Louisville
Naomi Nishi, American Educational Research Association
Nelson Noggle, CAEP
Timothy Nokes-Malach, University of Pittsburgh
Takako Nomi, Saint Louis University
Bassan Nondohou, AERA
Mary Norris, Virginia Tech
Isabel Nunez, Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne
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Leigh O'Brien, SUNY Geneseo
Catherine O'Brien, Gallaudet University/AERA
Thomas O'Brien, Univ. of Southern Miss
Ed O'Connor, Midwest Instructional Leadership Council
Matthew Odebiyi, AERA, NCSS
Nora Odendahl, AERA
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Cirecie Olatunji, AERA
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Min Sun, University of Washington
Gail Sunderman, University of Maryland
Dedvass Sunnanssee, AERA/ NCME/ Educational Research Methodology Dept at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Eric Surface, ALPS Solutions
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Shizhan Yuan, UNC-Chapel Hill
mark zabloki, Illinois State University
Lisa Zagumny, Tennessee Technological University
Matthew Zajic, University of California, Davis
Alana Zambone, Council for Exceptional Children Division for Research
Amy Zelenski, University of Wisconsin Madison
Carla Zembal-Saul, Penn State University
Jack Zevin, Queens College
Xiaoming Zhai, University of Washington
Shaoan Zhang, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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Liru Zhang, Delaware Department of Education
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Yu Zhang, UC Davis
Naxin Zhao, Wisconsin Center for Education Research
Addison Zhao
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