



October 15, 2025

Submitted via Regulations.gov

Matthew Soldner
Acting IES Director
U.S Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, DC 20202

RE: ED-2025-IES-0844; Request for Information; Feedback on Redesigning the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)

Dear Mr. Soldner:

On behalf of the more than 3 million members of the National Education Association (NEA), we submit the following response to the Department of Education’s request for information (RFI) soliciting feedback on redesigning the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) published in the Federal Register on September 25, 2025. **NEA appreciates the opportunity to respond to this RFI regarding the future of IES. The work of IES is critically important to this nation’s students, educators, and educational institutions, and we are pleased to offer the following recommendations to support the continued evolution of the Institute.**

Ensure IES Has Sufficient Human and Financial Resources

Recent staffing cuts and widespread contract terminations have resulted in the loss of decades of institutional knowledge within IES. Restoring the Institute to full capacity is an essential step in re-envisioning its role. Each center must be adequately resourced to function as Congress intended.

Although rebuilding will be a significant undertaking, it presents an opportunity to strategically restaff and reestablish agreements with external vendors. Any new staffing and vendor plans must include:

- Technical experts in education research and data analysis, and
- Subject area experts in topics such as education finance and educating students with disabilities.

We also encourage IES to prioritize hiring staff who are skilled in:

- Assessing both new and ongoing research and data needs and translating those needs into IES work products, and
- Disseminating products in diverse formats that meet the needs of a wide range of stakeholders.

Foster Inclusive Dialogue Across the Education System

A reimagined IES should serve as a hub for engagement across the education system. All interested parties such as students, families, educators, education leaders, researchers, policymakers, and the organizations that serve them, should have a voice in identifying which topics require new or renewed attention. In this process, IES should strive to hear all voices, not just those who are the loudest, the best-resourced, or the most tightly linked to the administration in power.

In some cases, relevant research may already exist but needs to be synthesized and communicated beyond academic or research circles. In others, new data collection and analysis may be warranted. The Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) have already laid the groundwork for stakeholder engagement. IES should learn from their successes and challenges to help guide future efforts.

Balance Timeliness with Research Integrity

A common criticism of IES is that it is too slow. While some delays are inherent to producing high-quality, unbiased research, federal agencies also have a responsibility to be timely in meeting stakeholders' needs. We encourage IES to continue timely-response initiatives such as the School Pulse Panel, which provides rapid data on critical issues like educator shortages. We also support expanding strategies like "First Look" report, which offer basic crosstabs of key data before full results are published.

However, the push for timeliness must not compromise research integrity. IES must maintain the highest standards for data quality, analysis, and reporting, and ensure it remains protected from political interference in all aspects of its work. The Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA) protects this independence. Under the statute, IES has the authority to "prepare and publish . . . research, statistics . . . and evaluation information and reports" without interference from the Secretary of Education or any other part of the Department. (20 U.S.C. § 9576(a)). Additionally, all IES research, statistics, and reports must undergo rigorous peer review before being published or otherwise made available to the public. (20 U.S.C. § 9576(c)).

Prioritize Students with the Greatest Needs Without Creating Silos

One of the greatest strengths of the American public school system is that it strives to meet the needs of *all* students. Yet we still have much to learn about how schools can best serve students living in poverty (and how that differs across rural, suburban, and urban areas), students with disabilities,

emergent multilingual learners, students experiencing homelessness, and other students with exceptional needs. IES must continue to prioritize work about these learners and the policies and practices that benefit them.

At the same time, many students have overlapping needs (e.g., a student may have a disability *and* be an emergent multilingual learner), and strategies aimed at supporting the highest-need students often benefit all students. This underscores the need for an integrated approach in which IES staff researching specific student populations are engaged in ongoing conversations across the Institute about how their work fits into what is known about other student populations.

Strengthen Research Synthesis and Dissemination

One of IES's greatest challenges is that many education stakeholders are either unaware of the resources it provides or are unable to access them in usable formats. The redesign of IES presents an opportunity to place greater emphasis on synthesizing existing research and improving dissemination. For most education stakeholders, having a research expert summarize what a body of research says is far more useful than understanding the specifics of any single study. IES has started this work through its Practice Guides; however, these guides may be either unknown to their target audiences (i.e. practicing educators) or too unwieldy to use given their length and depth. These guides also focus solely on issues of practice; this approach should be adopted for policy research as well. We recommend that IES collaborate with end-users, researchers, and communications professionals to develop a comprehensive dissemination strategy that includes research synthesis, product and content design, and user-centered distribution. This strategy should be rooted in the needs of education professionals and designed to ensure that IES products are timely, relevant, and accessible.

Conclusion

The NEA respectfully submits these recommendations for consideration. We strongly support the continued evolution of IES as an independent, well-resourced, and responsive institution capable of producing and sharing the research and data needed to improve education policy and practice across the United States. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Stacey Pelika at SPelika@nea.org, should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Daaiyah Bilal-Threats
Senior Director, Education Policy and Implementation Center
National Education Association