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November 28, 2011

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), I urge you to restore funding for the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) within the Institute of Education Sciences to \$71 million dollars – its FY2010 level. This modest investment enhances programs that have broad impact and make a significant contribution to the future workforce of our country.

Since its inception in 2004, NCSER has funded over 180 new research projects in areas that improve the educational outcomes of children and youth with disabilities. These include student assessment, autism, literacy, and mathematics and science instruction for children and youth with disabilities.

Importantly, these research activities directly respond to needs identified by state departments of education and local communities. Many projects begin when local school districts approach researchers at their local universities looking for ways to improve student performance and outcomes. Indeed, most of the funded projects involve local schools and universities working together to develop better ways to support and instruct children and youth with disabilities. Additionally, they have a direct and lasting impact on the local communities and schools that participate and lay the groundwork for improvements in practice and policy that will be used by states and communities nationwide.

We must restore funding to these important activities because despite all of the good work being done there is an ever growing need to ensure that children and youth with disabilities excel and contribute to society. As you know, the current statistics are alarming:

- The dropout rate for students with disabilities is 26.2%, nearly twice that of students without disabilities;
- Only 10% of students with disabilities receive a “proficient” score in reading and only 6% in math, in 2009 on National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).

To meet the challenges our nation currently faces, children must achieve at their highest possible level and enter the workforce ready to succeed. The research activities funded by NCSER are one essential way the field of special education and research work to meet these goals.

Therefore, I urge you to restore funding for NCSER to the FY 2010 amount of \$71 million. Now more than ever the federal government must ensure that practitioners, students and families continue to have access to research-based interventions and information that impacts student achievement in the classroom and lead to a successful career. If you have any questions, please contact Lindsay Jones, Senior Director for Policy & Advocacy at lindsayj@cec.sped.org or 703-264-9403. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah A. Ziegler".

Deborah A. Ziegler, Ed. D.
Associate Executive Director
Policy and Advocacy Services