

Memorandum

TO: **Federal Education R&D Partners**
FROM: **Knowledge Alliance**
DATE: **July 27, 2026**
SUBJECT: **Shared Messaging Framework for Communicating the Value of Federal Education R&D to Federal Policymakers**

Purpose

During our most recent convening, Knowledge Alliance members from across the country spent time exploring their own experiences communicating about their work and the value of education research and development (R&D). Based on that conversation, Knowledge Alliance (KA) developed a messaging framework to support more consistent, effective communication about the value of Federal education R&D.

This resource is intended to provide common language and framing that organizations across the education research ecosystem can adapt and use in advocacy, congressional engagement, public communications, and policymaker education efforts. By sharing common terms, framing, and examples, KA believes we can strengthen the collective case for sustained Federal investment in education R&D and better communicate how this critical work supports students, educators, States, districts, and communities. Please feel free to copy and paste messages directly from this document and/or adapt them to be relevant in your specific context.

Core Message

Every successful public awareness effort has a simple, memorable message that captures its purpose—whether it was "Got Milk?," "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk," or "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires." While education R&D is very complex, we believe the statement below achieves a similar purpose: a concise expression of why Federal investment in education research matters and why it should be protected.

America's students deserve an education based on what works, not guesswork. *Delivering on that promise is not possible without Federal investment in high-quality education R&D.*

Below are additional messages developed specifically for bipartisan, Federal policymakers:

America's students deserve an education based on what works, not guesswork. Federal investment in education R&D enables us to identify what works, bring it to scale, and get it in classrooms so that decisions that impact children are based in evidence. Federal investment enables us to identify effective teaching practices, build early warning systems for students, develop evidence-based instructional approaches, and create the tools and resources that help districts make smarter decisions. No other source has the scale or sustained capacity of the Federal government to invest in this work.

Cutting Federal R&D doesn't save money – it costs more in the long run. Federal investment in education R&D enables us to identify what works, bring it to scale, and get it into classrooms so that decisions that impact children are based in evidence. Every dollar invested in high-quality research and hands-on support prevents wasteful spending on things that don't work. It builds our future workforce and contributes to economic strength. Without it, we're not cutting waste, we're driving without a map.

Additional framing guidance:

- Speak directly about Federal investment; do not minimize or avoid it.
- Position Federal support as an asset that enables independent, credible evidence.
- Connect research investments to real-world outcomes and implementation.

Responding to the NAEP Narrative

Recent conversations have increasingly used stagnant or declining NAEP scores to question the value of Federal education R&D investment. KA recommends reframing that narrative.

NAEP is the thermometer—it tells us where performance stands, but not why or what to do next. *Federal education R&D provides the evidence needed to understand causes and identify effective responses.*

Language Guidance: Preferred Framing

Use language that is clear, practical, and focused on outcomes. Please see the chart below to see how we can make small language changes that can have a big impact on sharing our message.

Instead of...	Try...
<i>Technical assistance</i>	Support that helps schools and States put evidence to work
<i>IES-funded research</i>	Federally supported, independently conducted, non-biased education research
<i>Research utilization</i>	Ensuring that states, districts, schools, and educators have easy access to evidence that takes the guesswork out of decisions about education policies, practices, and programs
<i>Continuous improvement</i>	Building systems so that schools keep getting better over time
<i>Capacity building</i>	Giving educators and leaders the tools and knowledge to succeed
<i>Comprehensive centers</i>	Research and support teams working directly with States
<i>Federal R&D investment</i>	Federal investment in what works for students
<i>Equitable outcomes</i>	Better outcomes for every student, in every community
<i>Infrastructure</i>	Support systems / the backbone of how schools improve
<i>Research suggests...</i>	Evidence shows... / We know that... / The data tells us...