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**Align Educational Policy with the Science of Learning,
Wilson Tells Early Childhood Educators**

JUNE 17, 2014—Aligning educational policy and practice with the science of learning, informed by brain research, can help create a positive trajectory for young children to succeed in school and beyond. That was the core message delivered by educational psychologist and author Donna Wilson, who spoke at an early childhood education gathering in Minneapolis earlier this month.

Research shows that most all children have the cognitive potential to achieve at high levels if they experience high-quality instruction at school and support at home and in the community, said Wilson in her keynote presentation at the Second Annual Roundtable hosted by the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO). “Those who influence and create policy must make key commitments to ensure that teachers have high-quality learning experiences with ongoing opportunities to work together to develop the collective capacity for highly effective teaching.”

Wilson, who cofounded the Center for Innovative Education and Prevention, discussed how findings about *experience-dependent synaptogenesis*—the process through which the brain forms neural connections based on experiences in school, at home, and in the community—underscore the importance of the learning environment and quality of instruction to optimize children’s learning.

Citing recent research about brain plasticity and functional intelligence, Wilson told an audience of state and national educational leaders that virtually all children benefit from positive engagement with their teacher and peers and explicit instruction on the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies they can use to monitor, improve, and take charge of their learning across core subjects.

“There is a societal misperception that some children are not able to learn,” Wilson said. “The science of learning indicates something different. Based on scientific knowledge, we should act upon an understanding that potential is the capacity for acquiring the knowledge and skills to achieve at a higher level of performance when the proper conditions for learning are in place.”

Wilson reported that each individual’s learning potential is powered by 85 billion neurons, giving individuals the capacity to make an extraordinary number of neurological connections across the life span. Recognizing that intelligence is malleable and multifaceted provides increased understanding of how students learn.

“We have in place a scientific foundation for believing, planning, and leading so that virtually all students can achieve at higher levels,” Wilson said. “More than ever before, children need our support so they have a fighting chance to live an educated life. It is my hope that we can work together to make a difference.”

About the CEELO Roundtable

The 2014 CEELO roundtable, with the theme “Excellence for Every Child: Improving the Quality of Teaching Birth Through Grade Three,” took place June 5–6 at The Renaissance Depot Hotel in Minneapolis, Minn. The meeting brought together state and national early childhood education leaders to discuss the importance of improving the

quality of teaching for young children from birth through third grade. It was presented in collaboration with the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS-SDE), the Council of Chief State School Officers' State Collaborative on Early Childhood Education Assessment, and the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance.

About Donna Wilson

Donna Wilson, PhD, is an educational and school psychologist, author, and lead developer of the M.S. and Ed.S. degree programs with Majors in Brain-Based Teaching with Nova Southeastern University. Wilson is also cofounder of the Center for Innovative Education and Prevention (CIEP) and a pioneer in applying implications of research from the transdisciplinary field of mind, brain, and education to practice for teachers and educational leaders. She is the author of more than 25 books and professional articles, including *Five Big Ideas for Effective Teaching: Connecting Mind, Brain, and Education Research to Classroom Practice* (Teachers College Press, 2013) and *Flourishing in the First Five Years: Connecting Implications from Mind, Brain, and Education Research to the Development of Young Children* (Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2013), both coauthored with Marcus Conyers. Visit her website at <http://donnawilsonphd.org>.

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