San Francisco, CA – The U.S. Department of Education recently announced that WestEd has been competitively selected as the new Center on Standards and Assessments Implementation (CSAI). UCLA’s National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) will be the key partner. The CSAI will support states’ transition to new standards and assessments for college readiness. The funding was part of the U.S. Department of Education’s $52 million shared across 22 comprehensive centers, including seven content centers and 15 regional centers.

“These centers will help low-performing schools and districts close the achievement gap,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

“A key purpose of our new assessment center,” said CSAI Director Stanley Rabinowitz “is to help states align their standards, assessment and accountability systems to meet the challenges of the Common Core State Standards and next generation assessments.” Dr. Rabinowitz, a national assessment expert, added that most state accountability programs are in a transitional phase as states begin to implement their newly approved accountability waivers.

National testing expert Joan Herman, who will lead the CRESST component of the new center, said that the CSAI will benefit substantially from the experience and expertise of the CSAI’s preceding organization, the Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center (AACC). WestEd and CRESST were also the partners on the AACC.
“With virtually the same high quality team,” said Dr. Herman, “we can hit the ground running, helping states and districts make good choices about their standards and assessment systems.” A widely published test researcher, Herman is also a member of the National Research Council’s Board on Testing and Assessment and serves on the Joint Committee for the Revision of Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing.

First year funding for the new CSAI is $1,428,019. Comprehensive center grantees, including the CSAI, are quickly working to develop five-year plans to help meet regional and state K-12 education needs. The CSAI work plan is expected to include a broad number of strategies to strengthen student learning and assessment including:

• Collecting, evaluating, and annotating effective research-based strategies and best practices for inclusion in a web-based clearinghouse;
• Product development to fill identified high-priority gaps;
• Collaborative innovation to solve problems and generate new knowledge; and
• Targeted problem solving to provide direct technical assistance.

The new center will also benefit from the ongoing expertise of CRESST partner Margaret Heritage, an expert on formative assessment and learning progressions, as well as WestEd’s Edynn Sato, an expert on standards and assessment of special population students. Both will provide key insights to support states’ transitions to new standards and assessments.

The Center for Assessment in Dover, New Hampshire will serve as CSAI program evaluators and support the organization’s continuous improvement.

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