Building a National Research Agenda to Improve the Educational Assessment and Attainment of English Language Learners

September 19 – 20, 2012

UCLA’s National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) recently hosted a meeting of 20 national experts on English Language Learners (ELLs). The meeting, held at UCLA’s James West Alumni Center, was sponsored by ETS with funding from the American Educational Research Association.

“The purpose of the meeting,” said John Young, ETS researcher and meeting organizer, “was to develop a national research agenda for improving educational assessment and instruction to help support the growing number of English Language Learners across the U.S.”

According to a recent study from the National Center for Education Statistics, 21 percent of public school children in the United States speak a language other than English at home, and among them, 5 percent speak English with difficulty.

Joan Herman, CRESST Co-Director (emeritus) and co-author of a recent report on the achievement patterns of reclassified English Language Learners, said that the meeting “successfully outlined a number of critical topics for ELL research that will be featured in an upcoming special issue of the journal, Educational Assessment,” for which she serves as the editor.
Among the issues discussed at the meeting were ELL language development, classification, reclassification, classroom instruction, formative assessment, large-scale content assessment, accommodations strategies, and preparation to meet the rigorous Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English Language Arts and mathematics. By the 2014/15 school year, most states are expected to measure the CCSS using new technology-based assessments being developed by one of two consortia, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium or the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers.

Attending the ELL meeting were the following experts on English language learning and assessment:

- Jamal Abedi (University of California, Davis)
- Diane August (American Institutes for Research)
- Alison Bailey (University of California, Los Angeles)
- Margarita Calderon (Johns Hopkins University)
- Gary Cook (WIDA)
- Richard Duran (University of California, Santa Barbara)
- David Francis (University of Houston)
- Kenji Hakuta (Stanford University)
- Margaret Heritage (CRESST/University of California, Los Angeles)
- Joan Herman (CRESST/University of California, Los Angeles)
- Rebecca Kopriva (University of Wisconsin)
- Robert Linquanti (WestEd)
- Charlene Rivera (George Washington University)
• Edynn Sato (WestEd)
• Jerome Shaw (University of California, Santa Cruz)
• Deborah Short (Center for Applied Linguistics)
• Guillermo Solano-Flores (University of Colorado at Boulder)
• Guadalupe Valdes (Stanford University)
• Mikyung Kim Wolf (ETS)
• John W. Young (ETS)

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