



**National Center for Research
on Evaluation, Standards, & Student Testing**

UCLA | Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CRESST/UCLA POLICY BRIEF PROVIDES ELL RECOMMENDATIONS
TO HELP GUIDE RACE TO THE TOP ASSESSMENTS**

Los Angeles, CA –A new policy brief from UCLA’s National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) calls for major changes in the assessment of English Language Learner (ELL) students. Citing inconsistencies that they found in state ELL assessment policies and practice, combined with the continued low performance of ELL students, the authors of the brief recommend assessment reform including:

- Alignment of proficiency levels between English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards and ELP assessments;
- Increased standardization in the identification, classification, and reclassification criteria for ELL students;
- Item writing rules that reduce the language complexity of test questions; and

- A database of accommodations for individual students to improve accommodations consistency and validity.

In the research studies that helped form its recommendations, the CRESST researchers found substantial variation in state assessment programs, such as the numbers and terms used on English language proficiency assessments. They found one state, for example, that used six different levels of ELP *standards* proficiency yet just five levels of ELP *assessment* proficiency. In addition to the different number of levels, only one of the *standards* proficiency terms matched any of the *assessment* proficiency terms.

“Such differences,” said lead author Mikyung Kim Wolf, “can lead to improper ELL classification or to confusion about how well students are doing.” She commended states for making changes spurred in part by NCLB, but sees substantial room for improvement. Wolf led a three-year study of ELL assessment at CRESST before joining the Educational Testing Service in 2009.

“We believe that our recommendations could and should help inform Race to the Top Assessment developers,” said CRESST director and co-author Joan Herman, who is also a member of a joint committee that is revising the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. The U.S. Department of Education is sponsoring two Race to the Top Assessment grant competitions to support the development of innovative testing programs that more accurately measure student skills. Applications are due June 23, 2010.

Herman explained that many of the CRESST policy brief recommendations would be low- or even no-cost improvements and that the brief provides priority levels

for each recommendation. Numerous state educators and national researchers reviewed the policy brief prior to its publication.

For more information about CRESST Policy Brief 10, *Improving the Validity of English Language Learner Assessment Systems*, contact Ron Dietel at 310-794-9168; email: dietel@cse.ucla.edu. The policy brief is available on the CRESST web site, www.cresst.org.

About CRESST

The National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) conducts research into accountability systems, practices, and policies. The center also evaluates a broad number of educational programs and methods, with a central goal of improved achievement for all students and reductions in achievement gaps. The CRESST research in both reports was funded by the U.S. Department of Education through SEDL, a private, nonprofit education research, development, and dissemination (RD&D) corporation. CRESST however, assumes full responsibility for the findings in each report.

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