



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

October 3, 2011

Dear Colleague:

I hope this letter finds you well and enjoying the increasingly cooler days of the fall season. For the federal government, including the Department of Education, last Friday, September 30th marked the closing day of FY 2011 and we are now at the beginning of a new fiscal year. I would like to take this opportunity to bring you up-to-date on OELA's planned activities for FY2012, as well as summarize our FY2011 activities.

First of all, I want to share with you selected aspects of the main topics and themes distilled from last spring's National Conversations. Assessment and accountability for English Learners emerged as the #1 and #2 topics discussed, with the lack of reliable and valid assessments for assessing ELs in their native language cited as a prominent problem. The lack of disaggregated data on schools' success in exiting former LEP students from EL programs was the main concern on the accountability issue.

Standards, both Common Core and English Language Proficiency standards, was the third most frequent topic discussed across all six national conversations. Participants recommended that ELs be included in the development and implementation of Common Core standards from the outset and not merely as an afterthought. Participants thought it important that national English Language Proficiency standards be developed on the same scale as the Common Core standards.

Fourth was professional development for educators. Specifically, participants strongly felt that professional development for all teachers and administrators should reflect content dealing with EL matters and that all teachers and administrators should be prepared to effectively serve ELs. Fifth on participants' minds were language instruction educational programs. Participants felt models of effective programs and implementation were needed to help inform educational reform and improvement endeavors at the SEA and LEA level.

For a summary listing of participants' views expressed at the National Conversations, please visit:
http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/files/uploads/24/OELA_NCELE_Summary_Report.pdf.

Please know that the results from the National Conversations and other feedback you provided in FY11 were utilized to inform our planning for FY12 and to guide our ongoing efforts to integrate the EL agenda here at the Department. For example, already this week, we focused on EL assessment and accountability in two briefing sessions sponsored by OELA for ED headquarters and field staff and interested professionals from other government agencies. The sessions featured a nearly-completed evaluation study supported by Title III National Activities funds that will be available to the field in the coming months, titled *Exploring Approaches to Set English Language Proficiency Performance Criteria and Monitor English Learner Progress*. Upcoming OELA-sponsored events will address content standards and teacher preparation from an EL perspective, among other topics gained from participant/stakeholder input and feedback.

As OELA's scope of work has expanded to include early learning to career education for ELs, so, too, have our collaborations with other offices inside and outside ED. Following is a glimpse of what you can expect to see from OELA in the upcoming year.

1. A follow-up to last July's Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) forum, in collaboration with the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA)
2. A follow-up conference session on English Learners with Special Needs, in collaboration with the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) and ED's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)
3. A conference session on Teacher Preparation, in collaboration with the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE)
4. A conference session on adolescent and adult English Learners, in collaboration with Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and ED's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE)

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by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.*

5. A national roundtable on young ELs, in collaboration with a number of offices in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) including the Office of Head Start (OHS) and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

Thank you once again for your participation at the National Conversations, for the feedback that you have offered, and for your continued support of OELA. I look forward to interacting with you so that we may continue the work we have started to improve education for English Learners.

Sincerely,



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