9 October 2013

Dr. Libi Gil
Assistant Deputy Secretary and Director
Office of English Language Acquisition
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20202-6132

RE: Docket ID ED-2013-OELA-0117

Dear Dr. Gil:

On behalf of TESOL International Association (TESOL), a global education association representing over 12,000 English language educators in more than 150 countries, I am writing to provide the association’s comments in response to the Request for Information (RFI) regarding the evaluation needs of the field and the proposed research agenda for the Office of English Language Acquisition at the U.S. Department of Education.

As you are well aware, English learners (ELs) are the fastest growing segment of the school-age population in the United States. With the continued growth of the EL population, the changes to curriculum and instruction with the implementation of college- and career-ready standards, and the development of the next generation of assessments, the need for a strong and active Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) is now greater than ever. TESOL is pleased to learn of your recent appointment, and that the Department of Education is requesting comments on the evaluation and research needs of the field at this critical time.

Potential Evaluation and Research Studies

Of the areas identified in the RFI, TESOL recommends the following be given priority for areas of evaluation and further research:

1) Identification, screening, and assessment practices of ELs in general.

2) Strategies for data collection, data analysis, and data-based decision making with respect to EL assessment data.

3) The correlation of English language proficiency (ELP) standards with college- and career-ready standards and the alignment of ELP assessment with ELP standards, including assessments that are accessible to, and usable with, ELs with disabilities.

4) Key features of instruction for ELs that promote language acquisition, including academic language, social language, native language development, and content knowledge in various education programs that provide instruction in English or in English and another language.
5) Characteristics of professional development that prepares prospective teachers or current practicing teachers who are language development specialists or content teachers of ELs to design and deliver instruction that promotes language acquisition and content knowledge.

For area #3 identified above, OELA is in the best position to monitor current progress of states in developing and revising their ELP/ELD standards aligned to college- and career-ready standards. Since states are participating in either one of the consortia developing the next generation ELP assessments, or are working independently, OELA should monitor their progress and evaluate their work.

For area #5 identified above, TESOL recommends OELA revisit and update the study published by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) in 2008, *Educating English Language Learners: Building Teacher Capacity*. In addition to re-examining state requirements and efforts to prepare all teachers that work with ELs, OELA should specifically research the systems states have established (including requirements and credentials) to develop and prepare their ESL and bilingual specialists, with a possible cross-examination of different state credentialing requirements.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments and feedback. It is TESOL’s hope that OELA is once again able to provide national leadership on EL issues. TESOL looks forward to the opportunity to collaborate with you and the Department, and to continue its support of OELA’s work for ELs and English language teachers.

Sincerely,

Rosa Aronson, PhD, CAE
Executive Director

CC: Deena Boraie, President
    Yilin Sun, President-elect
    Suzanne Panferov, Past President