Who is an English learner? Moving Toward a (More) Common Definition of English Learner, and What It Means for Educational Policy, Research and Practice

Robert Linquanti
Project Director & Senior Researcher, WestEd

States participating in the four federally-funded assessment consortia are required to establish a "common definition of English Learner (EL)." This includes the two Race to the Top academic assessment consortia and the two Enhanced Assessment Grant English language proficiency (ELP) assessment consortia. This talk discusses current efforts underway to move toward establishing a common EL definition in ways that are theoretically-sound, evidence-based, and sensitive to the many policy, technical, and legal issues.

Specifically, the talk outlines central issues, and shares policy and technical options, for defining ELs using a four-stage framework of key criteria and processes to:

- Identify a student as a potential English learner;
- Classify (confirm/disconfirm) a student as an English learner;
- Establish an "English-language proficient" performance standard on the state/consortium ELP test against which to assess ELs' English-language proficiency; and
- Reclassify a student to former-EL status through the use of multiple exit criteria.

Progress and challenges to date are shared, and implications of this effort for policy, research, and practice are explored. Discussion and reflection are strongly encouraged.

Pre-Talk Reading:

Friday, January 24, 2014
12 to 1:30pm
Cubberley 115
Light lunch will be served