

NCTE News Release

A Professional Association of Educators in English Studies, Literacy, and Language Arts

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Statements on Scripted Curricula and English-Only Instructional Policies Approved by NCTE

During the 98th Annual Convention of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), November 20–23, 2008, in San Antonio, Texas, members attending Annual Business Meeting approved the following resolutions:

Resolution on Scripted Curricula

Background: The National Council of Teachers of English, the professional home for English educators since 1911, has been on the front lines advocating for curriculum development and implementation that reflects a solid basis in pedagogy, theory, and best practice. NCTE has acted over the years to recognize teachers as professional decision makers. NCTE also has promoted effective literacy programs and authentic assessment. NCTE's position statement "On the Reading First Initiative" (2002) clearly outlines professional concerns about the implementation of federal acts that result in mandates at the state, district, or local school level. NCTE's "Features of Literacy Programs: A Decision-Making Matrix" (2005) offers guidelines for structuring critical conversations as part of the informed decision-making process.

Despite all the efforts of NCTE, more and more constraints are being placed on teachers, on curriculum, and on classroom practices. The continuation of high-stakes testing and the resulting legislation connected to federal aid have come to dictate programs and practices. Despite research that demonstrates the failure of many mandated programs such as Reading First, school districts and educators are still being compelled to adhere to regimented, scripted programs. NCTE must reaffirm the authority of teachers as professionals who should make the decisions regarding materials and practices in literacy education. Be it therefore

Resolution

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English

- Continue to conduct research that documents the effects of scripted programs and high-stakes testing on teacher retention and job performance;
- Oppose policies that require educators to utilize scripted programs and materials;
- Oppose attempts by state legislatures, other elected or appointed officials, or school administrators to dictate scripted programs, materials, and methods; and
- Label such mandates as censorship.

(more)

Resolution on English-Only Instructional Policies

Background: The National Council of Teachers of English, the professional home for English educators since 1911, has always held that curricular decisions be built on solid pedagogical and theoretical foundations. Instructional programs should provide effective learning experiences for all students, including those for whom English is not their first language. As language arts professionals, the members of NCTE are concerned with seeing all students succeed academically. This includes giving students who speak languages other than English at home the opportunity to develop fluency in English. This fluency represents a key component in "academic literacy," in acquiring and learning to speak "the language of a particular discipline" (from NCELA's "Resources about English Language Literacy, Academic Language, and Content Area Literacy").

The acquisition of English is not, however, intended to displace or denigrate the student's home language. To this end, English-only policies have the effect both of limiting the instructional options available to teachers and of depriving students of their voices. NCTE has acted over the years to recognize teachers as professional decision makers. NCTE also acts on behalf of students in the classroom who must be afforded every opportunity to succeed academically. Any educational strategy, tool, and/or policy that precludes these principles is inconsistent with NCTE's beliefs and positions. Be it therefore

Resolution

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English

- Support continuing comparative study on the effects on students of English-only policies and other English language acquisition programs;
- Oppose policies that fail to recognize, in all content areas, the importance of adequate materials in students' first language and the necessity for personnel trained in language-minority issues;
- Oppose attempts by state legislatures to dictate curriculum, curricular materials, and/or teaching and learning strategies that exclude language-minority students from academic success, so that English language learners have access to the best resources for their needs;
- Support the work of local, state, and federal organizations that oppose English-only policies; and
- Label English-only policies as censorship designed to deprive language-minority students of their voices and their ability to receive "equal educational opportunity" in the classroom (from NABE's "Educational Excellence and Equity for ELLs," pt. 3).

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The National Council of Teachers of English, with over 50,000 members and subscribers worldwide, is dedicated to improving the teaching and learning of English and the language arts at all levels of education. For more information, please visit <http://www.ncte.org>.

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