

SUMMARY OF NCTE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DISCUSSION ON ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULT LITERACY

Ends Statement

Literacy is a complex activity that involves deep understanding through reading, writing, speaking, listening, and critical thinking within rhetorical contexts. Literacy Learning is a lifelong enterprise. Individuals do not learn to read and write, once and for all, but again and again, in contexts of meaningful use. Adolescents and young adults read and write for multiple purposes and audiences and in a variety of situations, many of which are located in digital, multi-media environments, many of which are located outside of schoolroom walls. As a personal and social process of building comprehension and making and articulating meaning, literacy of adolescents and young adults is integrally linked to academic excellence.

NCTE policies and actions in regard to adolescent and young adult literacy recognize that as adolescents' literacies and needs are highly varied, the kinds of rich, engaging literacy practices needed must also be varied, and therefore must go beyond one-size-fits-all recommendations. Likewise, while some policies and actions may be focused on specific populations (English Language Learners, struggling readers, young men) or types of literacies (digital, critical, cultural), the ultimate goal is increasing literacy skills for every adolescent.

If educators are to provide adolescents and young adults effective literacy instruction in schools, they must use the literacy experiences that students bring with them to school as starting points for instruction that enriches and extends students' competencies and knowledge. To do this, teachers must be aware of the variety of literacy experiences that students bring with them to the schoolroom, and they must know how to build upon their students' prior reading and writing experiences to extend and enrich them.

Identification of where NCTE should focus attention

In light of the adolescent and young adult literacy instruction that we would advance in the nation's schools, we believe NCTE is well positioned to undertake the following:

1. A research initiative to sponsor studies about the language and literacy of adolescents and young adults. Such studies might analyze existing research in adolescent and young adult literacy, re-introduce the results of qualitative/descriptive studies widely recognized as the equal of quantitative studies in the field of statistical research, or present new research such as data documenting the reading and writing in which adolescents and young adults are currently engaged inside and outside of school.
Research emphasizing work by practitioners and vignettes of students can serve well in getting our message out about the complexity of literacy and the expertise of teachers.
2. The broad distribution and circulation to educators, policy makers, and the general public of what the council learns from this research initiative.

3. A robust professional development endeavor aimed at preparing teachers in localities in their effective literacy instruction of the adolescents and young adults in their classrooms. Providing viable ways for teachers to explore and build on positive prior literacy experiences of adolescents and young adults, develop a deep understanding of content and the rhetorical nature of literacy, and integrate all aspects of literacy in the curriculum could form part of the professional development efforts.
4. An initiative to support leaders training literacy coaches in school systems to assist teachers in their effective literacy instruction of the adolescents and young adults in their classrooms.
5. Increased purposeful efforts to influence legislation and policies that will influence the teaching of adolescent and young adult literacy.
6. An information network or clearinghouse for members and the public regarding NCTE's involvement in adolescent and young adult literacy, teacher quality, assessment, and writing.
7. Continued alliance with professional organizations and parent groups to develop joint strategies to influence and implement legislation on adolescent and young adult literacy. We must speak with authority for teachers and for adolescents

Executive Limitations

- As true of all initiatives, NCTE expects its staff and project teams to conduct work consistent with its moral and ethical policies and core value statements as currently available.
- NCTE will not engage in actions that imply, directly or indirectly, NCTE support for scripted programs or any efforts that undermine the professionalism of teachers or that compromise the core values of NCTE.
- In acting in coalitions with other literacy groups, NCTE will make any difference of value, opinion or action clear to the coalition, to NCTE membership, and to the world.
- We have more ideas than we can accomplish. We must create priorities, clarify our objectives, work across the Sections, focus on the ends, and open the way for others to carry on the work, without overburdening staff.
- Actions and positions are part of an evolutionary interplay of new understandings of literacy/literacies, new understandings of capabilities and needs of adolescent learners, and political and public policy realities. Actions and positions are envisioned for a one to five year time frame.

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